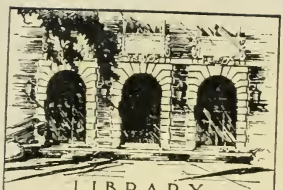

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MISREPRESENTATION

OR

SCENES IN REAL LIFE.

ONE OF A SERIES OF TALES ON THE PASSIONS.

——— A l'egro fanciul porgiamo aspersi
Di soave licor gli orli del vaso,
Succhi amari ingannato intanto ei lieve,
E da l'inganno suo, vita riceve.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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MISREPRESENTATION;

OR,

SCENES IN REAL LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

"No, Carry, I will never marry a man that I do not prefer to all others; it matters not what advantages of wealth or station he may happen to possess. Other girls may marry from ambition, and the wish to gain an establishment; but *I* will never give my hand without my heart: so do not urge me, Carry."

"But have you well considered all the consequences of this determination?—General Moubray's displeasure? Mr. Dyneley's disappointment?"

"I have, indeed, thought of all. I am sorry for Mr. Dyneley, and, still more, that I cannot gratify my uncle; but he loves me too well to desire a sacrifice which must involve my future happiness. And, entre nous, Carry, although I dare say I am a very charming person, Mr. Dyneley's refusal will not break his heart."

"Still, he admires you very much."

"Oh! yes, I know he is devotedly in love with me, or —— Eldersleigh."

"But General Moubray has evidently set his heart upon the marriage; and his wishes ——"

"Shall be laws to me on every other point; but on this I must,—shall,—and will, consult my own."

And, while Miss Moubray is trying to couch a decided refusal in such language as might render it as little unpalatable as possible, it may not be amiss to give our readers some particulars concerning this very resolute young lady. But we must go back a little. A story is always best when it begins at the beginning.

First, however, I would forewarn all who may honour these pages with a perusal, what they may expect to find therein. This little work was written principally for my amusement, and the narrative it embodies is nothing more than a description of common-place scenes and every-day occurrences. Wit I have none; my descriptive powers are not worth a pin; and to novelty I lay no claim. In truth, new things are rarities in these our days. All, therefore, who love startling incidents, or racy dialogue, or deep-impassioned scenes, will harldly relish this poor work of mine. My aim has simply been to delineate character and portray feeling; to make my scenes and actors natural; my story *possible*. Whether successfully or not, you, reader, must determine.

The hero of my narrative is a man of rugged temper, but soft affections; not a marvellous compound of every perfection,—of body and mind;—one who towers above his species, bends the most adverse circumstances to his

will, and builds up a very unaccountable fortune in an equally unaccountable manner; nor is he a mere tetotum, moving in obedience to every turn and twist, and, consequently, falling into a variety of scrapes and mischances from which the slightest exercise of common sense or judgment would have saved him; and my heroine ——; but it was of her I was about to speak.

Ellen and Frances Hutton were cousins, and, in some respects, a great similarity existed between them; for both were young, both handsome, both accomplished; but here the resemblance ended. Ellen, the portionless daughter of a naval officer, was mild, gentle, and affectionate; while in Frances, the heiress of a rich city banker, were observed those failings which are sometimes, unhappily, the accompaniments of wealth,—she was selfish and overbearing.

At twenty, Ellen married a clergyman, with a moderate living and slender private fortune; at two-and-thirty, Frances bestowed herself and

her one hundred thousand pounds upon Lord Selwood, the only son of an impoverished nobleman.

Ellen's married life was one of happiness—not unalloyed happiness, nor rapture, nor bliss, but of sober, sensible enjoyment. And when, at the end of fourteen years, Mrs Moubray found herself on the point of losing him from whom her happiness had been derived, her grief was deep and unaffected. "Ellen," said her dying husband, as he fondly took her hand, "we must part. Nay, grieve not, dearest, our separation is but for a season; we shall meet again,—meet, where there is neither sorrow nor sighing."

"Oh! my dear Frederic, we have been *so* happy; I cannot, will not, survive ——"

"Hush, Ellen, hush; remember whose is the rod, and who has appointed it; for my sake, for Cecil's sake, restrain your grief."

"What will become of her, of both of us, when you are gone? Frederic, Frederic, do not leave us."

"Alas! my Ellen, if you knew how much this costs me; how, for your sakes, my spirit cleaves to earth!"

"But is there no hope? Oh, say not so; let us have fresh advice; something may be thought of; some new mode of treatment may restore you. Yes, yes," she cried, in all the agony of grief, "I know, I feel, there is yet hope."

"No, dearest, no; my hours are numbered; the hand of death is on me, and my strength fails rapidly." He gasped for breath; then, in a faint, low tone, murmured, "My brother; oh, Ellen, why is he not here? I would have been by his death-bed."

"Dearest Frederic, there has not been time; it is impossible General Moubray can be here before to-morrow. Will you not try and sleep?"

"To-morrow,—to-morrow," he replied; "I shall not live to see to-morrow. And yet, if it were possible, I fain would see him once again. No, no, it may not be ——. Ellen, my love, you then must give him my dying words, my last

farewell. Tell him, that with my latest breath I left my Cecil to his charge; and you, too, Ellen, you must look to him." There was a short pause, a convulsive struggle, and then the breath came short and quick; the eye was glazed; the lips moved slightly, but uttered nothing; and ere the morrow's sun awakened into life the slumbering universe, and sent man forth on his daily task of sorrow and of toil, Ellen was a widow, and her child an orphan.

General Moubray did not refuse the trust thus solemnly bequeathed; for though an eccentric and very worldly-minded man, he had loved his brother. He was childless, too; and the family estate would have descended to Cecil had not the entail been cut off some years previously.

In announcing, therefore, his intention of making Cecil his heir, General Moubray did little more than an act of justice; and, when he allotted a considerable sum for her maintenance, and expressed his wish that her education should

be commensurate with her future inheritance, perhaps he listened rather to ambition than affection. Before we proceed further, one word, reader, respecting my heroine's *nom de baptême*, which, as you observe, and I know, is not feminine; nevertheless, it had been borne by all the members of the Moubray family, male or female, since the days of Cecil, fourth Lord Eldersleigh; who, having taken the weaker side in a rebellion, was condemned to death for high treason, and his forfeited estate bestowed on a more loyal branch of the family,—Sir Reginald de Moubray.

Now, the old Baron being rather choleric, and not altogether admiring this disposition of himself and lands, is said to have exclaimed against the injustice of a sentence which deprived his only son and namesake of his rightful patrimony, and to have warned his kinsman, that should any but Cecil Moubray dare to appropriate to himself the lands of Eldersleigh, his angry spirit would dispute the posses-

sion with the intruder; and Sir Reginald, not considering a visit from the old Baron a desirable event, immediately christened his youngest child by the name thus rendered indispensable to the owner of the property, which was made over to him; and what had its origin in superstition, being afterwards sanctioned by custom, on the demise of a little boy, two years her senior, it was decreed that the subject of these memoirs should in future be called by her second Christian name, as she was now the presumed heiress of the property.

In his youth General Moubray had been wild and extravagant, but latterly these failings had given way to family pride, and the grand object of his existence now became the restoration of the somewhat faded glories of the Moubray line; no means appeared more likely to secure this desirable end than an advantageous alliance for his niece, therefore he determined that Cecil should marry early, and marry well.

Mr. Moubray left a will, which, as his fortune was extremely moderate, provided rather for the future care of his daughter than for her pecuniary necessities. By this document General Moubray and Lord Selwood were appointed Cecil's guardians; without their consent she could not marry, and her residence, until of age, was peremptorily fixed with one of those gentlemen, or with her mother.

Mrs. Moubray was not of that class of persons "who weep for an hour, perhaps, then mourn a year;" neither was she utterly disconsolate and inconsolable. She loved and honoured the memory of her deceased husband, and considered she should best fulfil the wishes of that husband by devoting herself entirely to her daughter. Whether Cecil's education was conducted on the most approved principles of modern tuition, we cannot tell; certain it is, that at thirteen years old she was a pretty intelligent child; rather spoilt and wayward, perhaps, as only children and heiresses are apt to be, but altogether

very superior to most girls of her age,—so at least her mother thought.

At this time, however, an alarming change took place in Mrs. Moubray's health. All the usual means were resorted to, the most eminent physicians were consulted, the most approved remedies tried, but tried in vain; and a continental residence was at length ordered as a last resource. The experiment suceeeded only partially; the invalid rallied, but she did not recover; and after visiting Italy, the south of France, and the mineral springs of Germany, Mrs. Moubray fixed on Paris as her final resting-place—and such it proved. Ere Cecil Moubray reached her eighteenth year, her tender, devoted mother was no more.

Of Cecil's grief we need not speak; it was naturally deep and intense, for she mourned a parent whose whole existence had been devoted to her,—who had indulged her every wish, and had watched over her with an affectionate solicitude which neither disease nor suffering could

diminish. She was not, however, alone or unsupported in her affliction; for Mrs. Armstrong, an early friend of Mrs. Moubray's, was then residing in Paris, and in her family the poor orphan found a temporary home, and from her Christian kindness received all that tenderness and sympathy her forlorn situation so loudly demanded.

Cecil was not insensible to the feelings her melancholy position had called forth, and she repaid the attentions thus lavishly bestowed by all the affection and gratitude of which a warm and susceptible nature is capable, so that the friendship formerly subsisting between the mothers bid fair to be perpetuated by their children.

Cecil Moubray, though a heroine, was not a model of every virtue; on the contrary, I am sorry to acknowledge, there were in her disposition failings which, if fully developed, threatened to become faults of no small magnitude; and, unfortunately, the circumstances of her life hitherto had a tendency rather to encourage

than repress the evil. An acknowledged beauty, an heiress, the object of an uncle's pride, of a mother's idolatrous affection, never thwarted, seldom even opposed,—flattered, courted, and admired,—can we wonder that a spirit, naturally proud and impetuous—

"Chaf'd at restraint, and murmur'd at control?"

There were, however, redeeming points in her character. If Cecil Moubray wanted gentleness, she was open, sincere, and frank; if she were proud or wayward, she was also affectionate, high-minded, and self-denying.

CHAPTER II.

General Moubray heard of his sister-in-law's death with expressions of sorrow which were perhaps the more sincere as he felt that his niece, hitherto only the subject of his ambitious hopes, might now become a source of anxiety and trouble; at all events, according to her father's will, Cecil must in future reside with him; and the General was an old bachelor who by no means relished the restraint of female society. But there was no alternative; he therefore determined to bear his misfortune with becoming fortitude, and consoled himself with the re-

flection that so pretty a girl as Cecil would not be long before she found a more eligible home.

The Moubray family possessing much county interest, the present head of the house had represented ——shire in several successive parliaments, and never failed in giving his very decided support to the existing government. But a change of ministry, followed by a dissolution of parliament, took place ; and in the general election which followed, the late member, who had been brought forward by his friends with every prospect of success, was, by an untoward chance, taken ill suddenly on the day of nomination, and withdrew. The government candidate came in without further opposition, while his accommodating opponent received the promise of a highly honourable, and what was of still more importance, lucrative post in a distant colony.

The appointment, however, was not to take place for some months, and was at present a secret, as both the ministers and their new ally

agreed in thinking the less said about so disgraceful a transaction the better, and General Moubray, not feeling himself quite comfortable in the society of those whom he had thus basely betrayed, resolved to pass the intervening autumn and winter in Paris. He arrived there, accordingly, about three months after Mrs. Moubray's decease. Handsome apartments in the Rue de la Paix were engaged, our heroine installed in her new home, and surrounded by all the insignia of wealth.

Cecil had not yet recovered her mother's death; she was still in deep mourning; gaiety or amusement were out of the question. She saw little of her uncle, for, naturally enough, his pursuits and hers were quite dissimilar; she therefore spent the greatest portion of her time with the kind friends to whom she had been so much beholden. Under other circumstances General Moubray would have disapproved of this intimacy, for he did not consider the family of a reduced manufacturer proper companions for

the heiress of Eldersleigh; but situated as Cecil at present was, it did not appear that any evil could result from the acquaintance. Then it saved him trouble,—besides, it would have appeared ungracious to shew any slight to persons towards whom his niece was under a heavy obligation,—neither did he dislike altogether the individuals of the family. Mr. Armstrong was certainly vulgar, very vulgar; but his wife was well connected, and, in fact, rather ladylike than otherwise; and Caroline, though not pretty, possessed every advantage a first-rate education could bestow.

There was yet another member of the family, and *he* was a decided favourite with General Moubray. Well educated, extremely handsome, holding a commission in the —— Lancers, and only son of one of the richest manufacturers in the kingdom, Henry Armstrong was once thought a most desirable acquaintance by ladies of all ages,—and he was duly courted, caressed, and flattered; but his father's misfortunes

greatly altered the state of things. He was now a half-pay captain without expectations, and as his beauty had not departed with his wealth, Henry was henceforward considered by all prudent mammas and aunts, not only ineligible, but dangerous.

But Cecil's guardian was not one of these cautious persons; he was partial to Henry, liked his society, and saw no danger in his visits to the Rue de la Paix. Mrs. Armstrong, however, did; and many were the expostulations, numberless the warnings, and most excellent the advice, the young soldier received on the occasion. Henry listened with becoming deference, acknowledged the truth of his mother's assertions, assured her he was not in the least in love, promised to set off for Italy the following week, and—remained in Paris.

But on one account Mrs. Armstrong had no reason to regret her son's infatuation,—General Moubray had taken a fancy to him; his expected appointment brought with it extensive

patronage, and anxious to repay the kindness Cecil had received on the occasion of her mother's death, he offered Henry a situation in his household; it was gladly accepted, and the gratified mother, to whom alone the circumstance was confided, almost imagined her son's benefactor must view his passion in a favourable point of view; for, added she, "had this not been the case, would a man of the world, as General Moubray unquestionably is, have taken a step, the consequences of which no one could for a moment doubt." But General Moubray's views and intentions respecting Cecil were of an entirely different complexion: he had always been aware of the difficulty, or rather impropriety, of placing a young and beautiful girl at the head of an establishment such as his would be; but, as we before remarked, he had strong hopes of deliverance from this dilemma; and these hopes now seemed likely to be realized.

Mr. Dyneley, a young man of high family, made his appearance in Paris; saw, and ad-

mired Cecil; received every possible encouragement from her guardian; and after a due proportion of doubt and hesitation, made a formal proposal. The General was delighted. Mr. Dyneley was good-looking and gentlemanlike, in possession of an entailed estate of five thousand a year, and nephew and heir to Lord N——. "It was a most excellent match, and Cecil one of the luckiest girls in the world." But she thought otherwise, and, as the reader is aware, returned a decided refusal. General Moubray's indignation was extreme.

"Why, Cecil, what is the meaning of all this? What can you be thinking of? Have you taken leave of your senses? Five thousand a year, and a peerage in prospective! Are you aware of the advantages you are throwing away? Speak, child, speak; there's nothing provokes me so much as not being answered. What reason can you have for playing the fool in this manner?"

"Uncle, I am sorry to displease you, but —"

"Sorry to displease me, indeed! sorry to displease me! It's a pity you did not think of displeasing me when you were acting in this ridiculous manner. However, if your sorrow be sincere (as I believe a woman's seldom is), sit down at once, and write a note to Mr. Dyneley, and tell him, like the rest of your foolish sex, you did not know your own mind, and now wish to recal your refusal.—Or stay, I will write it myself."

"No, no, my dearest uncle, do not, I entreat you; I cannot, indeed I cannot, marry Mr. Dyneley."

"And pray, why can't you marry Mr. Dyneley?" said her infuriated companion, walking up to her, and setting his teeth firmly as he spoke; "Pray why can't you marry Mr. Dyneley? Answer me, Cecil."

"Because," stammered Cecil, "Because I do not like him."

"Not like a fiddlestick! Who ever heard of a girl refusing a man merely because she

does not like him? It's a positive absurdity." And General Moubray took several turns up and down the room, his boots making a very disagreeable creaking, as the boots of irritable gentlemen are apt to do on similar occasions. Cecil, unused to such scenes, burst into tears.

"Well, well," said her guardian, rather anticipating a fit of hysterics, of which he had a true masculine dread, and softening his tone in consequence; "Dry your eyes, Cecil; this is a very untoward business, and certainly a great disappointment to me; for to see you well and happily married is one of my chief wishes; nor has your conduct in this matter been altogether what I should have expected from you; however, if you can't make up your mind to take Mr. Dyneley, there's no use in saying anything more about it; so kiss me, and promise to behave better another time.———But still, Cecil, I should like to know your objection?"

"Perhaps," said she, playfully interrupting him, and throwing her arms round his neck,

" perhaps I do not wish to leave my dear kind uncle."

The General shook his head; he thought it very unlikely; and recommenced his musical promenade. Suddenly he observed Cecil smile, colour violently, and make a precipitate retreat from the window near which she had been standing; and following the direction of her eyes, General Moubray discerned Henry Armstrong threading his way through the confused mass of carriages, horsemen, and foot passengers which usually throng the streets of Paris. In a few minutes he was in the drawing-room, and, after a short conversation with the General, seated by Cecil's side; he did not remain long, but ere he went an appointment was made by her to accompany the Armstrongs in an expedition to Versailles.

For the first time, the light broke on General Moubray's mind, and Mr. Dyneley's refusal was accounted for; but very slowly, very reluctantly, did he receive the idea; he could not, he would

not, believe that a Moubray should so degrade herself as to form an attachment with the son of a manufacturer,—a ruined manufacturer!

And now, reader, why did Cecil blush? Why did she smile? Were there indeed grounds for her uncle's fears? Can you, will you guess? —No, you will not; it is not worth the trouble. Then I will tell you. Cecil was not in love with Henry Armstrong; she liked him, for he was lively and good-tempered; was pleased with his society, for his conversation was animated and amusing; and she did not repress his attentions, because she feared to hurt feelings still smarting under the mortification of altered circumstances. Nor did she consider him in any other light than that of a friend, for she was well aware that though Henry might think her a pretty entertaining girl, there was yet one of whom he thought still more highly. So, you see, Cecil was not at all in love. Why then did she blush? Cecil blushed, because she was ashamed of being seen in the very unlady-like

act of looking out of window; and she smiled, because she was glad Henry was coming to call, as his presence must put an end to the extremely disagreeable tête-à-tête between her uncle and herself.

"Pray, Mrs. Wilson," said General Moubray, "have you any clue to Miss Moubray's conduct? I mean, can you account in any rational manner for her refusing Mr. Dyneley?"

Mrs. Wilson had been Cecil's governess, and she still remained in the capacity of companion; she was not naturally a timid person, but stood in considerable awe of her interrogator, and replied, in a hesitating, flurried manner, "she was not aware of Miss Moubray's motives."

"But don't you think it very strange—very extraordinary? Mr. Dyneley has five thousand a year, and is heir to Lord N——." Mrs. Wilson agreed it was very extraordinary.

"Do you think it possible my niece can have a predilection in favour of another? Hang me,

if I can account for her conduct in any other way."

Mrs. Wilson was silent: she did not like to contradict her patron, neither did she wish to compromise Cecil. The question was not repeated, for the hesitation of manner displayed by the poor nervous dependent put the matter beyond doubt: General Moubray felt that his only plan was to remove his niece from Paris, and accordingly informed her that it was his intention to return to England without delay.

"Return to England at this time of the year? Oh! uncle, it will be so very disagreeable; but at least I hope you will not go immediately?"

"I shall certainly leave Paris as soon as the passports are made out."

"But Caroline Armstrong is to be married soon, and I shall be quite disappointed if I cannot be at her wedding—she wishes it extremely, and you know how kind they all were to me last summer."

"Yes;" said the General, drily, "I *am* perfectly aware of *all* the attentions you have received from that family.—And pray who is Miss Armstrong going to marry? her father's late clerk, or the attorney who ——"

"Caroline Armstrong," said Cecil, with some warmth, "is to be married to Sir John Hartfield's second son."

"Indeed! I am glad to hear she is likely to form so respectable a connexion.—Is there any money?"

"Not much, I believe, but they are sincerely attached; it has been a long engagement. His father refused his consent at first; but Mr. Hartfield has recently obtained an appointment at Florence, and they are to be married immediately."

"And without Sir John's sanction, I suppose?"

"No, no; Sir John has consented—you cannot think how happy they are; pray let me stay for the wedding."

But Cecil begged in vain: her guardian

thought a wedding, and such a wedding, the very last scene in which he should like his niece to take part. So they proceeded to England without loss of time.

General Moubray had no town house; but he rented an extremely pretty villa in the Regent's Park. His establishment was well appointed, embracing every comfort, and many luxuries; and Cecil began to think that London was not so "very disagreeable"—nay more, that in the spring, when the fogs subsided, and the balls began, it might even be pleasant. But these feelings frequently gave way to others of a more gloomy description, and she was often sad. She had no companion; England was to her a stranger land, and as there was nothing in her present monotonous life to occupy her mind or distract her thoughts, the anguish her mother's death had occasioned revived; not in full force, certainly, as in the early days of this, her first sorrow,—for time had done its work, and the keenness of grief was blunted; but memory was

busy still, and as the recollection of her tender, gentle parent rose before her, Cecil could not fail of being unhappy.

This state of mind was observed by General Moubray and attributed to another cause. "So,"—thought he, as he sat over the breakfast table one morning, "this is worse even than I expected,—she is fairly in love, actually pining for that low-born beggar; and for fear he should lack opportunities of playing the agreeable, I, fool that I was, must give him an appointment in my house, and they will be constantly together, for it is quite clear Miss Cecil will 'like no one' until this foolish affair is put an end to. It is really monstrous provoking to have another man's daughter always in one's house: my brother must have been mad when he made that will."

"Yet Cecil is a good girl, and if I were to remain in England it would be all very well; but as it is, I do not see what is to be done, unless, indeed, something else could be got for

Armstrong. And, by the way, that is by no means impossible. Lord L. is my personal friend, and I will apply,—yes, I will certainly apply to him. How foolish I was not to think of this before."

"Cecil, my dear, ring the bell; I want my horse brought round."

"I fear, uncle, that it rains; would it not be better to order the carriage?"

"No, no; I am going out on business, and have no time to lose."

The bell was rung and answered, the horse ordered, and the General about to leave the room, when the servant re-appeared, bearing the letters which had come by that day's post. There were several for General Moubray, but they were not particularly interesting. He broke the seals, cast his eyes over the contents, and left their full consideration to a future period. Cecil's despatch, however, was of a different nature.

"Oh, I am so happy, so pleased, Caroline

Hartfield will be in England in a few days; she is coming to visit her husband's family. How delighted I shall be to welcome her.—I suppose I may ask them to spend some time with us?"

"Is Captain Armstrong to accompany Mr. and Mrs. Hartfield?"

"I do not know, but I should hardly think so; Caroline does not mention. Yet stay," said Cecil, referring to her letter; "Caroline does say something about him. Oh! here it is,—'Henry is at Florence.'"

The General moved towards the door, and Cecil was half inclined to follow and again urge her request, but her uncle's manner was not encouraging; so she desisted, and comforted herself with reflecting that she had the entire control of her morning hours, and a carriage at her command, consequently she and Caroline might be much together, and enjoy themselves exceedingly.

Disappointment is the lot of man; fairy visions

vanish, joyous hopes are blighted, trusty friends betray, and pleasant parties fail. All tends to prove that disappointment is the lot of man. There are, however, it is said, exceptions to every rule, and in this instance Cecil's fate was one.

The Hartfields came; later, indeed, than had been announced, but they did come, and remained some weeks.

From this time, as our readers will believe, Miss Moubray's spirits improved wonderfully, and her life was spent in the most agreeable manner, walking and driving, seeing sights and talking with Caroline; in the latter particular only Cecil's enjoyment fell short of her anticipations; a sister of Mr. Hartfield's was staying with him, and of course partook of all the above-mentioned pastimes.

Now, although Elizabeth was a sensible, well-bred girl, to whom Cecil would not have objected as an occasional companion, she thought her continual presence a very great restraint, and wondered that Caroline did not think so too

But Mrs. Hartfield's feelings, latterly, had taken a new turn; her husband had become the supreme object of her thoughts, wishes, and affections; and she quite forgot that her dear Edward's sister might not prove as interesting to others as she was to her. Cecil was about to make a grand discovery, which occurs sooner or later to most young ladies; videlicet, that a married friend is not so desirable a person as one who still lingers in single blessedness.

Malgré this drawback, however, Cecil enjoyed herself exceedingly; her uncle, though subject to occasional fits of temper, was very indulgent,—that is to say, he interfered with none of her plans, disapproved of none of her movements, (provided she did not keep the dinner waiting,) and cheerfully and readily answered the somewhat heavy demands on his purse. Cecil had companions, plenty of money, and her own way; it was not therefore wonderful that she was in good spirits, if not positively happy.

But if, in this instance, Miss Moubray es-

caped disappointment, her guardian was not so fortunate. We left him in a shower of rain, making the best of his way to Downing-street, and quite sanguine as to the result of his application there. Nor did the reception he met with in any measure damp the ardour of his hopes; Lord L. was delighted to see General Moubray, and would have the greatest pleasure in serving an old friend: "There might be difficulties, and some delay; but he would do his utmost, and had no doubt of ultimate success."

Lord L. was perfectly sincere in making these assurances; it would have gratified him to have obliged General Moubray, more particularly as his lordship's fifth son was unprovided for, and the post vacated by Henry, being one which required little mental exertion, would be exactly suited to him. But ministers, actuated by the very best and purest intentions, do not always answer the expectations they have raised; and about three weeks after the above-mentioned interview had taken place, General Moubray was in-

formed that, notwithstanding his most strenuous exertions, Lord L. found it impossible to procure the desired appointment; and as if this were not sufficiently vexatious, the very next day Mrs. Wilson declared herself afraid of the climate of ———, and unwilling to leave England. On this occasion General Moubray did not storm, in fact, such a mode of proceeding would have been highly impolitic; but he offered a considerable increase of salary, with the prospect of still further advantages. The lady was, however, resolute in her refusal, and there remained no alternative but the endeavour to find a successor. With the hope, therefore, of meeting with advice and assistance in this unpleasant difficulty, the perplexed veteran betook himself to No. —, Bruton-street, where resided one of his very few female friends, who being at home, General Moubray was ushered into the drawing room, and after a few preliminary observations, unfolded his distresses.

Lady Louisa Hampden, a person of much

good sense and feeling, entered fully into the subject, and had it been in her power would gladly have given more than her sympathy ; but she was so fully alive to the difficulty of finding a person altogether competent to discharge the duties of the situation required, that she could not immediately think of any one whom she could conscientiously recommend. She promised, however, to make inquiries, and if any success resulted from her endeavours, would have great pleasure in apprising her visiter. Baffled in every way, General Moubray returned home, thinking his niece a very great plague. The following day he wrote and despatched a letter by the general post, and in the beginning of the ensuing week informed Cecil that he must leave town on business, and should be absent a few days.

CHAPTER III.

"You are very pale to-day, my dear Cecil," said Mrs. Hartfield to her friend as they drove towards St. James's Street; "I'm afraid you are not well. Has anything happened? Is the General displeased? I'm sure something is wrong. Tell me, pray tell me, what is it that distresses you?"

"Oh! Caroline, I'm very unhappy. I'm not to go; my uncle will not take me; I am to be left behind."

"My dear Cecil, you do not surely mean that you are not to accompany General Moubray?"

"Yes indeed, Carry, my uncle has determined not to take me with him. You cannot think how much I feel it."

"But I thought your father's will guarded against such a measure. Is it not true that you are obliged to reside with your guardian?"

"It is quite true; but I have, unfortunately, another guardian—Lord St. Maur; and with him I must remain until my uncle's return. It is really extremely disagreeable, and I am more provoked than I can express with Mrs. Wilson; it is, in fact, entirely her doing; for if she had not taken this ridiculous panic about the climate I'm certain my uncle would never have thought of leaving me with persons I have never seen, and who, no doubt, will be as little anxious for my society as I am for theirs. Think, Caroline, how miserable it will be to remain upwards of two years in a family where I can but be considered as an unwelcome intruder, and disliked accordingly."

"That does not follow," rejoined Mrs. Hart-

field; "who can know my Cecil and not love her? Besides, are you not related to Lord St. Maur?"

"Merely connected: you know he married my mother's cousin, Frances Hutton; but it is some years since she died."

"But," said Caroline, after a pause, "if Lord St. Maur be a widower, how can you reside in his house? It would not be correct."

"Oh, yes, it will; there is a sister of his—Lady Emily Warham—who, with her two daughters, lives at Selwood; my uncle positively raves about her, and says, to be introduced by so elegant a woman will be the greatest possible advantage for me. Selwood Castle, too, is a magnificent place; but I am sure I would rather a thousand times be anywhere else."

"And is your uncle quite determined?"

"Oh yes, quite. He has made up his mind, and I know it would be hopeless to endeavour to dissuade him, for when he has once determined upon anything, nothing in the world will

shake his purpose; so in less than a fortnight my delectable visit is to begin. Oh! how I wish it were over."

"What sort of a person is the Earl himself?"

"My uncle says, extremely sensible, and gentlemanlike; but I never place any dependence upon his judgment: he is so apt to take fancies. One thing, however, is quite certain, my cousin's marriage was a most unhappy one; and though I believe Lady Selwood was very much to blame, we can hardly imagine that all the fault lay on her side."

"But have you never seen Lord St. Maur?"

"Never; shortly after the marriage, my father and mother spent a short time at Selwood; but I was not with them."

At this moment Elizabeth—who, considering the conversation of a private nature, and not altogether intended for her benefit, had occupied herself in scrutinizing with much earnestness each passing object—suddenly exclaimed,

"There is Lord St. Maur!"

"Where? where?" cried both her companions at once, and trying to make amends for the rapidity with which the carriage rolled on by peeping through the little back window, whereby they obtained an admirable view of General Moubray's livery servant.

"There—opposite to that print shop—this side, Cecil—speaking to a guardsman."

"What?" said Miss Moubray, "that fat, vulgar looking person? Surely that cannot be Lord St. Maur! and yet I don't know why I say so, for it is impossible to imagine anything more decidedly plebeian in appearance than my uncle's ministerial friend, Lord L. However, we shall soon have an opportunity of knowing more about his lordship, for he dines with us on Wednesday; and, by the way, Carry, I do hope you will come early; you know it is to be 'my first appearance,' and I feel a little nervous."

"Will the party be a large one?"

"Hardly; there are so few people in town at this season of the year. Let me see who we are

to have; Lady Louisa Hampden and her daughters, Mr. Wickham, yourselves, General Fielding, Sir John Thornton,——I cannot recollect any one else. But, Elizabeth, are you acquainted with Lord St. Maur?"

"No, not acquainted; Lady Emily Warham and her daughters were at Tunbridge-wells two years ago, when mamma was there; and we knew the family by sight."

"Then you did not visit?"

"Oh dear, no; Lady Emily is much too fine a person to associate with a mere baronet's family."

"I thought so," cried Cecil; "I am certain they are a proud, disagreeable set of people."

"Dearest Cecil," said Caroline, who was both older and wiser than our heroine, "do not, I entreat you, give way to prejudices which may prove both unfounded and unjust; pray remember, that charity thinks no evil. What have you in that casket?"

"Diamonds, family diamonds, which my uncle

has given me. Yes, they are handsome, but the setting is quite out of date, and I must call with them at Storr's before we return home."

Accordingly they alighted at the jeweller's; and, after some wavering and deliberation, Miss Moubray gave the necessary orders for resetting her ornaments. Then she bought a bracelet, two pair of earrings, and a brooch; most people will agree in thinking this rather a considerable addition to a young lady's trinket-box, and that our heroine was an extravagant girl; perhaps, however, in this instance, her profuseness may be excused, for it was not selfish. The earrings were for her companions, the bracelet for Mrs. Armstrong, and the brooch, which contained hair, was intended as a parting gift for Mrs. Wilson.

The carriage was then ordered to stop at Madame Maradan's, where Cecil gave very particular orders respecting a half-mourning dinner-dress; and purchased a bonnet, which was declared to be exceedingly becoming, an opinion

in which the wearer cordially acquiesced. Afterwards they drove to the town residence of some of the Hartfield family, in Upper Grosvenor Street; and as Cecil did not consider her presence necessary on this occasion, she remained in the carriage, and passed a quarter of an hour most agreeably, conversing with the Prince Eugene de C——. Altogether she spent so pleasant an afternoon that she returned home with her equanimity quite restored, and even inclined to hope that Selwood might prove a pleasant residence. I am much disposed to think that the transient glance she had obtained of her future host had no inconsiderable share in producing this improved tone of mind. Fat people are generally good tempered; and Cecil thought it highly probable that the "stout gentleman" she had seen near the print shop in St. James's Street might turn out an easy, manageable person, of whom she need not be in the least afraid.

But a few minutes' converation with her uncle

speedily convinced her that Elizabeth must be mistaken; and when, on the following day, Lord St. Maur called at the house, and, finding General Moubray from home, contented himself with leaving his card, Cecil, disappointed at losing so good an opportunity of gratifying her curiosity, and perhaps a little piqued by her guardian's apparent want of attention to her, felt very much disposed to revert to her original opinion.

Wednesday arrived: Cecil was out late, and General Moubray in a terrible fidget. "Cecil," cried he, when she at length made her appearance, "how is it you are so late? You will not be dressed in time to receive your guests. Where in the world have you been all the morning?"

Cecil did not answer, her attention being completely absorbed by a very pretty little piece of folded pink paper which had been put into her hand as she entered the house. At length, having mastered its contents, she replied, "A note from Miss Hampden, uncle—an excuse; Lady

Louisa has the influenza and is afraid to venture out; it is really a pity, for she is a very agreeable person, and talks so well; we shall miss her dreadfully. Besides, we shall not have ladies enough."

"That," replied the General, "is generally considered a fault on the right side."

"I know it; but as it is not pleasant to be so completely in the minority, would it not be as well to allow poor Mrs. Wilson to join us?"

"On no account," said her uncle, who had not yet forgiven poor Mrs. Wilson's late desertion. "It's very tiresome, though," continued he; "our party will be too small. I wish now I had asked young Dyneley; I met him to-day in Bond-street."

Cecil had a great dislike to Mr. Dyneley's name, inasmuch as she knew her uncle had by no means forgotten her contumacy on the occasion of that gentleman's offer; she therefore thought it quite time to begin her toilette, and hurried off to her dressing-room, where she

found her attendant in a very disagreeable humour.

"Make haste, Mason," said Cecil, after a time; "it is late,—later than I thought: there, that curl will do very well. Do make haste."

"Yes, ma'am," replied the abigail. "But 'tis no use for me to be hurrying myself, and dressing your hair not fit to be seen; 'tis no use for me to be hurrying myself, I say, when there's no dress for you to wear."

"What do you mean," said her mistress, looking perfectly aghast at this fatal announcement. "Has not Maradan sent home my dress?"

"No, indeed, ma'am; and as many as three messengers have been sent for it, and all to no purpose."

"What shall I do?" cried Cecil. "My uncle will be so angry; and there is somebody come already. What unprincipled people milliners are! But, Mason, pray see, is there no other dress I can wear?"

"I'm afraid not, ma'am; you've been so long in mourning."

"Let me see, at any rate."

Mason was right. The few evening dresses remaining of a once well-furnished wardrobe, were quite impracticable, for they were coloured, and Miss Moubray was still in slight mourning.

"Then I suppose I shall be obliged to come in, as good children do, with the dessert; or make my first appearance in the drawing-room like a governess, or young lady, not yet out of the school-room; unless, indeed, I wear my old black crape; and perhaps that will be the best plan, although it is dreadfully shabby and unbecoming. Oh! here is my dress. Come, Mason,—quick,—that will do. How lucky that it fits so well. I wonder who it is that came so early. Mr. Wickham, I suppose."

Mr. Wickham was an admirer of Miss Moubray's, in a quiet sort of way, and rather a favourite.

"Well, Cecil," said her uncle, kindly, as she entered the drawing-room, "I told you, you would be late. However, as you are not often unpunctual, I must not scold you. Lord St.

Maur, allow me to introduce my niece, Miss Moubray."

Cecil was in high beauty: dress became her,—the little toilette trepidation had heightened her complexion,—and General Moubray's look and manner plainly spoke his sense of his niece's loveliness. But in this opinion Lord St. Maur evidently did not agree, for, notwithstanding the habit of controlling and concealing the emotions exercised by all who mix in general society, the most indifferent bystander must have perceived, from the sudden change in his countenance, that his introduction to his beautiful ward gave rise to feelings which were anything but pleasing. He recovered himself, however, and, after addressing a few common-place remarks to her, recommenced the conversation which had been interrupted; while Cecil betook herself to the sofa, where she sat, feeling excessively uncomfortable, and wondering why Mrs. Hartfield did not come.

Knock succeeded to knock, gentleman after

gentleman was ushered into the room, and still she sat in solitary grandeur. All the guests, with the exception of Mr. Wickham and Sir John Thornton, were strangers to her, and retreated to the other end of the apartment the moment the necessary introduction was over. Of Sir John, there was no hope. General Fielding had seized upon him, and they were deeply engaged in a political discussion; but Wickham, Cecil thought, ought to have known better, and she determined to punish him for his inattention by being extremely cold and distant at his next morning visit.

Hopes of future revenge, however, afforded no present relief; and, almost driven to despair, our heroine at last resolved to open a communication with Lord St. Maur, who was standing midway between her and the fire, apparently wholly indifferent to the scene around him.

Accordingly, the Earl was informed, "that the day had been fine, and Miss Moubray agreeably surprised in the climate of England."

But he either did not hear or did not heed the interesting intelligence; and Cecil was too much discouraged to repeat her remark.

Soon after, Caroline, the long expected Caroline, entered the room, with Elizabeth on her arm, and followed, not by her husband, but by Henry Armstrong, who, in fact, had been the cause of the delay. Mr. Hartfield was either indisposed or lazy, and Henry, who had arrived rather suddenly from the continent, was too happy to take his place.

According to the most approved rule and general practice in novel writing, I believe I ought to give a full and particular account of all that was done, said, or eaten, at the dinner table, over which Cecil presided, with an accurate description of the several guests who graced the board. This is certainly an admirable plan for filling a book; nevertheless, I feel greatly inclined to leave these interesting details to the imagination of my reader, merely premising, that, with the exception of being less numerous,

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perhaps, the party was precisely such an one as the last at which he assisted; for I do believe there is nothing in the whole world more monotonous than dinner parties.

"When I was in England," I once heard a French lady say, "although I dined in several different houses, I was as certain of my dinner as if I had ordered it; for I invariably found the same dishes on every table." She might have added—"and the same guests, too;" for, with the exception of the difference of names, (and what is in a name?) the dinner company in one house is precisely the dinner company in another.

A few elderly gentlemen who sit at the head of the table, as many dowagers near the foot, one or two young ladies in the middle, and several young men to fill up the interstices. Reader, is not this a *fac simile* of your last dinner party? And need I tell you, in addition, that, at the entertainment I am describing, the wines were excellent, the dishes well dressed; that Henry Armstrong was in unusually high spirits, and

that his good humour and anxiety to please appeared to greater advantage (in Cecil's eyes, at least,) from being contrasted with the reserve and taciturnity of the nobleman who sat beside her.

"My dear Elizabeth," exclaimed Caroline, the moment the ladies had reached the drawing-room, "how could you make such a mistake? —there is not the slightest resemblance. Lord St. Maur is one of the handsomest men I ever saw, and the gentleman you pointed out to us on Saturday was both ugly and vulgar looking; I assure you, I could hardly keep my countenance when I compared his extremely plebeian appearance with the very elegant person of the young Peer who was dining with us. How *could* you make such a blunder?"

Elizabeth, with considerable candour, acknowledged her error; adding, that she had frequently seen Lord St. Maur walking with the Misses Warham, but, from the slight disparity of years, had always considered him to be a

cousin, or elder brother. And then, by way of reparation, perhaps, for her previous injustice, Miss Hartfield passed a very glowing encomium on the personal appearance of this much talked of individual, in which Caroline perfectly acquiesced. They did, however, disagree on one point. Elizabeth thought a slight contraction of the forehead, whereby his dark, straight, well pencilled eyebrows, were brought much closer than had been by nature intended, indicated more than seriousness of character,—"she was afraid he was morose and ill-tempered."

"Elizabeth," replied her sister-in-law, "I cannot agree with you. There is, I must allow, at times, a disagreeable expression about the mouth: but when Lord St. Maur smiles, as he did when General Moubray was speaking of his little girl, his countenance is very pleasing. Indeed, I do not think he is ill-tempered; to me, he looks rather like a person who thinks deeply, and has read much."

"Then I am sure it is a great pity he does

not allow his friends to benefit by his studies," cried Cecil, who had, until now, been entirely engrossed in turning over some new music Henry Armstrong had brought from Florence.

"Did you give him an opportunity, Cecil?" asked her friend.

"Oh, I am not speaking on my own account; I assure you, I had no wish whatever for his conversation; but I do think he might have given himself the trouble of addressing a few words to General Fielding, instead of sitting up, looking as solemn and disagreeable as the ghost in Don Giovanni; indeed, I am not sure whether the ghost is not the most *aimable* of the two; for *that* does sing, while Lord St. Maur never opened his lips, excepting to offer me his assistance; and even then, his manner was so odious I was out of all patience, and said I would help the fricandeau, or whatever it was, myself, when, (as a punishment for my petulance I suppose), I had a dreadful misfortune, and spilt the sauce upon the table-cloth."

"Ah!" said Elizabeth, "that reminds me of what once occurred to me; I cannot tell how it happened, but I was obliged to carve a ham; and do you know, with all my efforts, I could not get out the first slice: I thought I should have died of shame and confusion."

"And so, Cecil, you are not pleased with your new friend?"

"No, indeed; who could be pleased with so rude and disagreeable a man? I am sure, Carry, you could not like him yourself."

"I don't think Lord St. Maur can be considered exactly rude; his manner certainly might be improved, but perhaps it arises from the relative position in which you are placed. "Perhaps," continued Caroline, smiling, "perhaps he suspects that his pretty ward has a will of her own."

"And that I am to be frowned out of it," interrupted Cecil; "then I can assure his high mightiness he will find himself much mistaken. Now don't look so grave, Carry; I am, you know,

a true Moubray, and as such, will submit to no despotic sway. Were Lord St. Maur an older man, the case might be different; but, as it is, rely upon it, if he ever does gain an ascendency over me, it will be by *influence*, not *dictation*. Captain Armstrong, I am glad to see you still retain your continental habits, and have taste enough to prefer the drawing to the dining-room: and, as a return for the honour you have conferred on us, you shall be umpire in a grand dispute."

"With the greatest pleasure; and I will *try* to be impartial. But you must tell me first the grounds of the argument."

"They are easily stated: Is the gentleman who during dinner sat on my right hand disagreeable or not? Ca ry says, no; Elizabeth and I say, yes. Which way will you vote?"

"With the ayes, unquestionably. I should describe Lord St. Maur as pride embodied in conceit; a man, too, who, where he dared, would play the tyrant."

" My dear Henry," replied his sister, " you're really too severe !"

" I cannot think so, Caroline. I watched him narrowly, and am convinced he is haughty and overbearing in the last degree."

Mrs. Hartfield thought these remarks little calculated to reconcile Cecil to her future residence in Lord St. Maur's family, and proposed music, by way of finishing the discussion. Several duets were sung, but Cecil was not musically disposed, so that when General Moubray brought up the last detachment of gentlemen, he found his niece still earnestly conversing with her supposed admirer; and Lord St. Maur listening with much satisfaction, and assisting Caroline, who was an excellent musician, in turning over the pages of her music-book.

But scarcely had Cecil, in compliance with her uncle's directions, taken her place at the instrument, and commenced singing, than the Earl walked abruptly away. The place thus strangely vacated, was speedily filled by Wickham; and

Miss Moubray's manner testified very unequivocally her sense of his good-natured politeness.

Caroline observed and regretted this occurrence, trifling as it was; for she knew it would tend to increase Cecil's prejudices against her guardian. Mrs. Hartfield was still more grieved by remarking, that the mention of Miss Moubray's name awakened on his part sentiments of an equally unpleasant nature.

"The dislike was evidently mutual; he is displeased," thought she; "offended by Cecil's inattention at dinner, and certainly it was very foolish to suffer herself to be so entirely engrossed by Sir John Thornton; and as the baronet is neither young nor entertaining, it makes the slight more conspicuous. Oh! how I wish, my dear impetuous little friend, you would learn to be more guarded and careful in the expression of your feelings."

"Well," said General Moubray, after the company had departed, "all things considered, the party went off well enough; but, my dear Cecil,

do let me beg, that in future, when you are placed between two gentlemen, you will direct your conversation equally to both; there is nothing more ill-bred than to make a distinction between your guests. And by the way, Cecil, it will be as well to take a few lessons in singing, when you return to town; you must learn to open your mouth more, like your friend Caroline Hartfield; her singing is worth something, and so Lord St. Maur thought, for he listened to her with great pleasure; but when you began he walked away, and no wonder either, for confound me if it wasn't more like a rat squeaking behind the wainscot than a young lady's voice."

Miss Moubray retired to rest that evening, very much out of spirits, or temper, and wishing with all her heart that Mr. Wickham, good-natured, quiet, respectful Mr. Wickham, had been her guardian instead of Lord St. Maur.

CHAPTER IV.

HORACE St. Maur had the misfortune of being born a younger son, and inherited a younger son's prospects—ten thousand pounds, a commission in the Guards, and the representation of the family borough when the death of his father should open the house of hereditary legislation to his elder brother. Marriage was out of the question, unless, indeed, such an alliance as might be the means of paying his debts, and procuring him an establishment suitable to his rank: an union merely of affection must not be thought of; if he did marry, he must bow at the shrine of

Mammon. In addition to a very handsome person, he was both clever and sensible; but as sensible people sometimes do very foolish things, Horace one fine day committed the inconceivable imprudence of falling violently in love with his first cousin,—pretty, pennyless, Eleanor Beauclerc. He did not, however, tell his love, for he knew that, under present circumstances, such a disclosure would be very injudicious; but he *looked* it, and the lady smiled her approbation. There was no actual engagement between the young people, but, as it is called, an *understanding;* and Horace returned to Oxford, resolved to study diligently, and sanguine in the hope that the period was not very distant when the superior talents he was conscious of possessing, backed by his father's influence, would place him in such circumstances as might enable him to ask and obtain the fair hand of her he loved.

Shortly after this, however, two events occurred which materially altered his feelings towards Eleanor and his position in society:

Miss Beauclerc became Lady Newrystown; and Lord St. Maur's eldest son was killed by a fall from his horse. Horace became Lord Selwood; but, notwithstanding this accession of rank and importance, there was one respect in which his situation underwent no change, for the extravagance of the late viscount had left an accumulation of debts, for many of which his father now became answerable, and an advantageous marriage for his successor was still necessary as the only possible means of freeing the family estates.

Eleanor's admirer was deeply wounded by her inconstancy; but few men, I believe, sigh long over a hopeless passion; and Lord Selwood very speedily discovered there were many much prettier girls than his cousin, and that he had had a most fortunate escape. The circumstance, however, produced an unfavourable effect on his mind—as far, at least, as the fair sex were concerned. "He had been deceived; cruelly, basely deceived; Eleanor Beauclerc was a

heartless coquette, and so were all women." Thus reasoned Horace at twenty; and at thirty his opinions had undergone little or no change.

About two years after Lady Newrystown's marriage, the fashionable prints announced the probability of a speedy union between Lord St. Maur's only son and the beautiful and wealthy Miss Hutton. This intimation was received by the friends of both parties with very opposite feelings; those on the lady's side wondered that Frances should be so foolish as to risk her happiness by marrying a man many years younger than herself; and some *disinterested* persons, who had large families to provide for, thought it would have been much wiser and better if she had been satisfied with not marrying at all.

Lord Selwood's friends, on the other hand, were highly gratified with the match: one hundred thousand pounds in hard money would go far in paying off mortgages, and extricating the family estates. There were ad-

vantages, too, in the lady's age;—"For," argued the old Earl, (who in fact had been the principal abettor of the marriage,) "a woman at her time of life, who has had her full swing, is much more likely to settle down quietly, and be contented to lead a rational, sober, and inexpensive life, than a girl of nineteen, who would be mad after gaiety and amusement, and never happy but when she was committing some extravagance or another."

The Earl was much mistaken. There are undoubtedly instances in which the votaries of dissipation sicken and weary of the empty joys they have been pursuing; but in a far greater number the love of pleasure and display "grows with what it feeds upon;" and thus it was with Lady Selwood.

Beautiful, and, what is of more estimation still in the matrimonial mart, *wealthy*, Frances Hutton was one and thirty, and yet unmarried; not, as some of her kind friends hinted, because she had not yet recovered a disappoint-

ment which she had received several years before; still less from lack of offers; but simply because the constant gaiety and excitement in which she moved so entirely suited her habits and disposition that she felt no inclination to change her lot; and, when at last she consented to marry Lord Selwood, she was not influenced by admiration for his handsome person, nor even was she swayed by gratified vanity, but solely by the notion, that, as mistress of one of the finest places in England, and the wife of a man whose future rent roll exceeded thirty thousand per annum, she would be able more fully to indulge her taste for amusement and love of change.

Frances had not the slightest intention of settling down into a quiet wife; on the contrary, she meant to be extremely gay, fashionable, and dissipated; nor did the early part of her married life disappoint these brilliant expectations.

The fortnight of customary seclusion was saved from being tedious by the novelty and

splendour of her recently acquired position in society. And as Lady Selwood paced the gorgeous apartments of her new abode, or sauntered through the vast domain by which the castle was surrounded, it would have been difficult to persuade her that in marrying she had done a foolish thing.

Then followed a series of visits to friends and relations; and while this excitement lasted Frances had no doubt of the prudence of the line of conduct she had pursued; nor did she observe, what every body else did, that the politeness of her young husband was fast becoming mere indifference, and that at times he could scarcely conceal the disgust and contempt he felt for her vanity and folly. It was not until they returned to occupy their magnificent, though somewhat gloomy abode, that Frances made the unpleasant discovery, that *home* amusements would form no part of her future life.

She might pay as many visits as she liked,

she might invite, in return, those of her intimate friends who could be satisfied with the quiet enjoyment of a small, *stupid*, family circle, but nothing further; balls, private theatricals, or even large parties of visiters, were interdicted as suiting neither the delicate health nor embarrassed finances of her father-in-law.

From this time, unpleasant suspicions began to intrude themselves, and gradually Lady Selwood became convinced she had made a great mistake. A sensible or an amiable woman would have endeavoured to accommodate herself to the circumstances in which she was placed; but Frances was neither sensible nor amiable; and as weak people are almost invariably conceited, she blamed, not her own folly in making so imprudent a match, but her husband, whom she secretly accused of having deceived her upon the subject of his affairs.

Lord Selwood bore these ebullitions of his lady's discontent as well as could be expected from a naturally irritable temper; that is to say,

he generally took himself out of the room, and left her anger to expend itself. But at last, her ill-humour passing all bounds, she declared she would quit Selwood Castle, and insisted upon a separate establishment. "It was very hard," she said, "that she who, even as an unmarried woman, had been the mistress of her own house, should be condemned to lead the life she did."

"You forget, Frances," angrily replied her husband, "that before our marriage I explained to you over and over again how desirable, or rather necessary, our residing with my father for two or three years would be, and you then consented to it without any difficulty."

"It may be so; but how could I possibly imagine we were to pass our time in this dull, humdrum, miserable manner. I'm sure I always expected to live as other people of rank do, or I never would have consented to become your wife."

"I wish with all my heart you never had," replied he, mentally.

"In short," continued Frances, "I am quite determined to spend the next four months in town; and orders must be given to have the house in Grosvenor-square prepared for my reception."

"The house in Grosvenor-square is let for two years."

"Let for two years? and why, may I ask?"

"Because, as I have told you at least twenty times, my father's income is so much curtailed by my late brother's extravagance, that at present it is impossible to keep up more than one establishment. Colonel Warham's affairs, too, are turning out badly, and I fear there will be scarcely money enough to cover his debts, much less to provide for his widow and children; and as something must be done for them, our spending this spring in town would be highly unadvisable. I do therefore hope you will not persist in your present intention."

"I must say, I think it very hard that I am to pay for your brother's extravagance. And

what are Lady Emily's distresses to me? She brought them upon herself by marrying as she did. I certainly shall *not* give up my intention of going to town; and as you are always complaining of the want of money, allow me to inquire what is become of mine? I suppose it is not all spent? Why can't I have at least the interest of it?"

"Your fortune, Lady Selwood, was, with your free consent, applied to the discharge of those debts which pressed most heavil yon the property your son may eventually inherit; and in return, a jointure of nine thousand a year was insured to you; and I must confess I cannot see that you have much reason for complaint."

"A jointure, indeed! a jointure! What good will a jointure do me, I should like to know? It is ten to one I ever live to want it; I shall be moped to death, or go out of my senses—or break my heart!"

"Nonsense!" said the Viscount, as he prepared to leave the room.

"It is not nonsense," half screamed his irritated lady. "It is not nonsense; I wish it were. But I tell you, once for all, that to London I *will* go. I have no idea of being made subservient to a parcel of beggars!"

"A parcel of *what?*" demanded he, furiously.

"Of *beggars!*" repeated Frances.

"And do you dare to apply such an epithet as that to my sister and her children?"

"Yes," she replied, coolly; "Lady Emily is, by your own shewing, neither more nor less than a beggar. Still, if you dislike the term, it can be changed to pauper, or mendicant!"

"This is too much! Lady Selwood, you forget yourself, and I must insist upon your retracting that impertinent and offensive expression!"

"Indeed, my Lord, I shall do no such thing! I have said nothing which it is necessary to retract. But I must really request that you will control your temper, in the first instance; and in the next, that you will take the necessary mea-

sures for securing a house in town for me. If the house in Grosvenor Square be really let, I must be satisfied with a rented one,—but it must be near the park, and a good one, of course; I have not been used to small rooms!"

"Control my temper! It would be as well, I think, that you should look to your own, Lady Selwood, before you complain of mine!"

"I assure you I was never more calm in my whole life; a little agitated, perhaps, but that is hardly wonderful, considering your violence, and the weak state of my nerves; besides, I have never been accustomed to such scenes as these. But I am satisfied, my Lord, that when you are cooler you will no longer hesitate to meet my wishes. Pray allow me to pass!" And, with a smile of mock complacency, she left the room.

Lord Selwood's impetuous temper was wrought almost to a pitch of madness; and, after furiously pacing the room for some time, he ordered his carriage, and left the castle, without taking leave of his amiable lady, or giving

the slightest intimation of his intended route. Frances was actually weak enough to imagine that she had gained her point, and that her husband's journey related to the wish she had expressed of going to town. It is true, it would have been more satisfactory had some further communication on the subject taken place between them; but Fletcher, a favourite servant, to whom Lady Selwood imparted her anticipation, speedily removed all remaining doubts from her mistress's mind, by the assurance that his lordship's *gentleman* had said something about going to London.

There appeared, therefore, no reason to question her triumph, and great was the complacency with which this modern Griselda contemplated the victory she had gained: but when a week had passed, and no tidings came of either house or husband, she began to fear her rejoicing had been premature. Another week elapsed, and then Lord St. Maur, becoming uneasy at his son's absence, commenced a series of in-

quiries which Frances found some difficulty in answering; and it was very mortifying to be at length obliged to own she neither knew where Lord Selwood was, nor why he went, nor when he would return.

At last a letter did come—but not to her. It was written from Lord Newrystown's, and gave no notice of any intention to return home. Lady Selwood, now thinking she had carried matters too far, determined to despatch a penitential epistle to her Lord; but ere she could summon resolution to commence this very unpleasant task, her discontent and ill-humour received a fresh impetus.

Unamiable and disagreeable as Frances was, she possessed a friend, at least an ostensible one; and so close had been the intimacy between the ladies, that it was asserted by some well-advised persons, that had not Amelia Trevor listened to the soft wooing of a rich, good-tempered Irish viscount, Miss Hutton would have remained Miss Hutton still. Amelia's wedding was an

extremely gay one; and, such is the force of example, Frances, who acted as bride's maid on the occasion, appeared in a few weeks after in a still more prominent position.

Neither of the marriages was, however, unexceptionable; for Lord Coleraine was as much too old as Lord Selwood was too young; so that it was observed, that could the two gentlemen have been shaken together in a bag, each lady might have had a suitable lord; but this species of amalgamation not being practicable, Amelia had undoubtedly made the most judicious choice,—a truth of which no person was more fully convinced than Lady Selwood, who about this time received a visit from Lord and Lady Coleraine. They had but recently returned from the continent, and Frances listened with ill-disguised vexation to the glowing description of her friend's gaieties, and witnessed the unbounded indulgence of her good natured husband with feelings little short of envy.

"How different is my lot," she thought,

" and how strange it is, that Amelia, who had but forty thousand pounds, and not half my beauty, should be so gay and happy, while *I* am moped to death. It is true, her husband is old, and wears a wig; and their place in Ireland is not worth looking at, while mine is called a *show* place; but I should like to know what use there is in that, if I may not ask my acquaintances to come and see it. And although Selwood is handsome, and can make himself agreeable when he chooses, what good does that do me if he is to spend all his life away from home? By the way, I wonder why he stays so long at Lord Newrystown's! I thought Amelia looked very odd yesterday when I told her he was there. I certainly am the most unlucky person in the world; I never heard of any one being so unfortunate. Ellen used to weary me to death talking of her happiness and of Mr. Moubray's kindness and affection; Lord Coleraine never thinks of contradicting Amelia, and lets her have her way in everything; even vulgar

Mrs. White, at the Parsonage, does just what she chooses with her husband; while *I* am treated like a child, and shut out from every enjoyment. I do think Selwood must do it on purpose to break my heart and get rid of me, that he may marry some one he likes better. I wish I could find out about his being at Lord Newrystown's without asking a direct question.

"I would not for anything have Amelia know how unhappy I am: she always was an envious, spiteful creature, and now that she is growing coarse and ugly she will be worse than ever; she certainly is very much altered since her marriage; for my part, I must confess, I never admired her; but if she ever had any beauty it is all gone now. I can't think what makes Lord Coleraine so fond of her; perhaps it always is the way with old men. I'm sure I wish I had married an old man!"

CHAPTER V.

"THIS is really a magnificent chateau, my dear Frances," said Amelia, as they walked slowly along the terrace. "I have seldom seen anything more beautiful, and feel quite out of conceit with our own poor place in Londonderry: still there is an advantage in having only an Irish estate; for, as I told Lord Coleraine, nobody thinks of living there; a visit of a few weeks may be all very well, but to reside altogether in such a country would be impossible."

"And what did Lord Coleraine say?" rejoined Frances, who began to wish her husband's property had been in Ireland, too.

"He agreed with me, of course; you know *we* never differ."

"Where do you intend to live?" inquired Frances, after a pause.

"I have not yet decided. This spring we shall pass in town; visit our friends during the summer and autumn, and next winter I think it most probable we shall try Brighton. Coleraine fancies the warm sea bathing may be useful for that stiffness in his ankle."

"I thought Lord Coleraine's lameness proceeded from gout; will sea bathing agree with that complaint?" remarked Frances, more than ever exasperated by Amelia's good fortune.

"Gout, my dear! What can you be thinking of! My husband has never had the gout, excepting, indeed, a very slight attack brought on by some imprudence several years ago."

"I rejoice to hear it, for really Lord Coleraine's lameness made me quite uncomfortable; and as gout is almost universal at his time of

life, I thought it could be nothing else; and from your thinking of leaving us so suddenly, I imagined he was apprehensive of a speedy attack."

"By no means, I assure you; it is some matter of business calls us away. I can't exactly say what, for I do not understand these things."

The truth was as Frances suspected: Lord Coleraine, having undergone some warning twinges, was in hourly expectation of an attack; and his lady cheerfully consented to abridge a visit of which she was already heartily tired.

"And you really must leave us this afternoon?"

"Indeed we must; I regret it extremely; particularly as I have not had the pleasure of seeing Lord Selwood; but," added Amelia, pressing her friend's hand, "we shall, I trust, soon meet again; for you will of course be in town after Easter, and in the meantime, when Lord Selwood *does* return, pray offer him the assurance

of our regard, and say how delighted Lord Coleraine will be to make his acquaintance."

Frances could scarcely restrain her indignation at the idea of *her* husband being patronized by Lord Coleraine.

"Tell me, my dear friend," continued her tormentor, "does Lord Selwood often stay from home? Were I in your place, I must acknowledge, I should be apt to prohibit such long absences."

"Lord Selwood manages his father's affairs; and as the estates are a good deal scattered, he must sometimes be called away by business."

Amelia shook her head mysteriously, then added, "*Business* is a very convenient excuse; but are you quite certain that in the present instance it is not rather *pleasure* which detains his Lordship? Pray do not agitate yourself, my sweet Frances! I may, you know, be wrong in my conjectures; indeed, I am not sure whether I ought to have alluded to the subject at all; nor should I, had not Lord Coleraine spoken so

decidedly about it,—and he is the very last person in the world to believe a scandalous report: still, you know, it *may* be unfounded."

"What report?" eagerly demanded Frances.

"Don't ask me, dearest Frances; pray don't. I wish I had not said anything about it. Ill-natured stories are, you know, so often merely falsehoods."

"But what is it? Tell me, Amelia! tell me, I conjure you."

"Have you, then, never heard anything of Lord Selwood's attachment to Lady Newrystown?"

"Never, never, until this moment."

"Do you not know they were once engaged?"

"No, I never heard it. Are you certain it is true?"

"Quite; the match was broken off for prudential reasons, and the lady obliged to marry another. And —— it is said——"

"That he admires her still?"

"She is at any rate a decided coquette, and extremely beautiful; and such being the case,

as *your* friend, dearest Frances, I could not hear of his spending so much time at Lord Newrystown's without uneasiness."

Lady Selwood had not one iota of affection for her Lord, but her vanity and self-love were deeply wounded by this account of his inconstancy; and, bursting into tears, she exclaimed, passionately, "Oh, Amelia, what shall I do? Counsel me, pray counsel me. Shall I write to Selwood?"

"Indeed," replied Lady Coleraine, "it is very difficult to know what to do in such a case. A letter might be useful, but it would depend entirely on the humour he was in when it arrived. Why do you not rather go to Lord Newrystown's yourself? Rely upon it, there is nothing so effectual as a viva voce communication."

"But I am not acquainted with Lady Newrystown,—how then could I go to her house? Besides, Selwood would be furious if he discovered that I went on his account."

"Was it from himself that you heard of his being there?"

"No," replied Frances, sullenly; "Lord Selwood has not done me the honour of telling me where he is; I learnt it by chance."

"Then you are supposed to be ignorant that he is at Lord Newrystown's?"

"Undoubtedly."

"So much the better; Lord Selwood cannot then suspect the real motive of your visit."

"But," persisted Frances, "how can I pay a visit where I am not invited?"

"Is not Lord Newrystown's place within a few miles of Malvern?"

"Yes, I believe it is."

"Then make your physician prescribe change of air for you; and, in accordance with his advice, set off for Malvern; when there, write a note to Lady Newrystown, stating that, being in her neighbourhood, you could not deny yourself the pleasure of becoming acquainted with so near a connexion; follow the note immediately, and by your presence put a stop to this unhappy business. Of course you will not leave Lord New-

rystown's without Lord Selwood; that, in fact, would be no difficulty, for in decency he could not suffer you to depart alone."

Even Lady Selwood's high and enterprising spirit shrunk from making so "bold a stroke for a husband;" indeed, it is possible she would not have mustered sufficient courage to follow her friend's advice, had not Lord St. Maur (to whom she hinted her intention of visiting Malvern) expressed his decided disapprobation of the plan. From that moment Frances ceased to waver, and determined to commence her expedition without delay.

Nothing material happened during the first day's journey. The weather was fine; and, exhilirated by the constant change of air and scene, Lady Selwood experienced a buoyancy of spirits to which she had long been a stranger, and warmly applauded herself upon the resolution she had evinced, which would at any rate prove her firm determination not to remain any longer in the seclusion of Selwood Castle. But this

happy state of self-gratulation was destined to give way to a very different order of affairs. Towards the middle of the ensuing day, our fair traveller became so seriously indisposed as to be unable to proceed. She alighted at an inn of the meanest description, and, after some hours of severe suffering, gave birth, prematurely, to a little girl.

It was not to be expected that, to such a disposition, the prospect of maternity would be very attractive; on the contrary, Frances could hardly have reconciled herself to the idea, had it not been for the eclat which generally accompanies such events. The splendid wardrobe; the obsequious attendant; the fashionable accoucheur; and above all, the pompous announcement, that, "on such a day, in Grosvenor Square, Viscountess Selwood had given birth to a son and heir." These were her anticipations; alas! how different the realities. The village surgeon for assistant; as nurse, the blacksmith's wife; a puny female infant, at the *Cock* and

Blackbirds! for such was the ignoble cognomen of the miserable alehouse where Mary St. Maur first drew her breath.

Poor Lady Selwood! It certainly was a very mortifying catastrophe; nor was the vexation in any way diminished by the reflection that, had she listened to the old Earl's prudent remonstrances, these evils would have been avoided.

Lord Selwood, who was duly informed of his wife's misadventure, repaired immediately to the scene of her disasters, and, in the joy with which he clasped his infant to his breast, almost forgot the surprise naturally elicited by the strange circumstances in which he had found his lady.

For a short time, harmony seemed to be restored between this ill-matched pair. All the better feelings of Lord Selwood's nature had been called into action, and Frances was so fearful of awakening his curiosity as to the real cause of her most unsuccessful journey, that for a time she became more gentle and conciliatory, and received with unusual suavity some costly

ornaments with which her husband presented her on this happy occasion.

But Lady Selwood gained more than ornaments by her daughter's birth : the infant was sickly, and the anxious father was easily persuaded nothing could be half so beneficial for his little girl as sea air. Accordingly, after spending a few weeks at an hotel in London, they took possession of one of the best houses in Worthing. The demon of discord was not, however, long in re-asserting his sway; indeed, the very circumstance that should have proved a bond of union between the parents became a source of endless dissension.

Horace idolized his child, while the unnatural mother regarded with feelings of absolute dislike the innocent cause of her mortification; and, from overrating the importance of her newly acquired dignity, her temper, always imperious, became positively ungovernable. Lord Selwood's disposition was ill-calculated to brook such conduct; they quarrelled inces-

santly, and when, in consequence of Lord St. Maur's having had an alarming attack of illness, he was summoned home, they parted with mutual satisfaction.

In the course of a few weeks, Lady Selwood, becoming wearied of Worthing, discovered that Brighton was likely to prove a gayer residence, and removed thither. She had the satisfaction of finding several of her acquaintance there, and of knowing that others would arrive with the approaching winter.

And now, released from the presence of her Lord, occupying an excellent house, followed and courted by a throng of idle triflers, Frances once more entered upon the mode of life she had formerly found so agreeable; and which now appeared doubly fascinating, as contrasted with her dreary existence at Selwood Castle.

She patronized balls, plays, concerts; gave select dinner parties; walked, drove, visited, and flirted. Frances was supremely happy both in her present and anticipated pleasures; but, un-

luckily for her future enjoyments, notice of these gay doings reached Selwood Castle, coupled with the intimation that Lady S. was perpetually surrounded by a crowd of dissipated young men, and making herself very conspicuous with Captain Danby. She was in consequence most disagreeably surprised by her husband's unexpected arrival, just as she was on the point of stepping into her carriage to attend a fancy ball; and our readers will easily imagine, that the welcome with which she greeted him did not increase in cordiality on her being informed that on the very next morning she must hold herself in readiness to return to her hated home.

In vain did Frances expostulate, weep, scold, go into hysterics, and try to faint: Horace was inexorable, and they left Brighton on the following day. As may be supposed, Selwood appeared henceforward doubly odious to this miserable victim of selfishness and folly; but although her discontent and ennui increased hourly, she dared not now, as formerly, vent her

ill-humour by openly complaining to her Lord; for she knew her conduct had been such as fully to merit the restraint she found so irksome. An addition to the family circle had, however, recently taken place, and Lady Emily Warham became the subject of every species of ill-nature and petty malice from her unfeeling sister-in-law. A being less unamiable than Frances would have commiserated Lady Emily, (for she lately had become a widow, and the pittance which had been saved from the wreck of her husband's property hardly deserved the name of independence,) and, far from aggravating, would have endeavoured to alleviate her painful situation. But none of these considerations weighed with one who thought of nothing, cared for nothing, but herself; while the gentleness and patience invariably displayed by her victim served only to increase her spiteful malevolence.

And thus it ever is: a noble disposition is disarmed by gentleness and submission; while, on

the other hand, an ungenerous mind becomes more and more overbearing, in proportion as it is unresisted.

Lady Emily bore these annoyances in uncomplaining silence, for she did not wish to widen the breach between her brother and his wife; but Lord Selwood, who was not an inattentive observer of what was passing, remonstrated strongly with Frances, and endeavoured to convince her of the cruelty of such conduct. His interference was worse than useless; for the lady, delighted at discovering she possessed this indirect mode of annoying him, returned to the charge with redoubled vigour. She was, in fact, quite determined, that as she was not suffered to be happy in her own peculiar fashion, no other member of the family should be; and it must be owned she succeeded admirably.

Three miserable months were passed in this manner, and then a gay ball was announced in the neighbouring town. Lady Selwood declared

her intention of attending it. It was to no purpose she was reminded that the precarious state of Lord St. Maur's health ought to have precluded the idea of public amusement; that the assembly in question was given for political purposes by the party opposing the St. Maur interest, and that her presence there would have a very extraordinary effect: she had determined to go, and she kept her resolution.

Whether the pleasures of that evening were sufficiently vivid to repay the dreary drive, is not known; perhaps Frances found them so; for she danced much, and stayed to a late hour; but, in returning home, scarcely had the carriage cleared the town when it was upset, (ill-natured people said, Lord Selwood bribed the coachman,) and was so much injured that it was impossible to proceed; a post chaise was procured, and Frances was conveyed in it to Selwood: but the long exposure to the damp night air brought on an attack of inflammation, which terminated fatally; and in less than a fortnight this

wretched victim of vanity and egotism was called to render an account of the talents she had wasted, the time she had misemployed, her squandered wealth, and her neglected duties.

Oh, could we in our hours of joy and festive gaiety but remember that this polluted world is not our rest,—could we but bear in mind that riches, time, abilities, are only talents of which we shall be called upon to give a strict account, —that man, with all his beauty, and all his strength, is but a flower of the field, to-day flourishing in loveliness, to-morrow cut down and cast away,—how different, how very different, would our lives become ! But it is not so ; blinded by pleasure, led by example, carried away by the selfish feelings of our nature, we shun the warning voice, and, in the madness of our folly, dance on the very brink of the precipice which stands ready to engulf us.

CHAPTER VI.

Lord St. Maur did not long survive his ill-fated daughter-in-law; and at five and twenty Horace found himself in one of the most trying situations in which an erring mortal can be placed: he was the uncontrolled possessor of rank, wealth, and influence. His first care, upon taking upon himself these responsibilities, was to secure an independence to Lady Emily, who, however, still continued to reside at Selwood; for the young Earl, like the generality of noble widowers, had had enough of matrimony, and eschewed the very idea of a second

alliance; and his sister it may be easily imagined, carefully avoided any measure which might, in the remotest manner, endanger this most unexceptionable resolution.

Nothing could exceed the harmony of the family circle; Lady Emily was not a clever, scarcely a sensible woman; but she had discernment enough to perceive that St. Maur's temper would bear no opposition, and she framed her course accordingly. His word, his look, became a law; she disputed no opinion; she argued no point; and could she have guessed his inmost thoughts and wishes, it would have been but to have bowed before them. Such being the case, it was not wonderful that the brother and sister agreed admirably. True it is, he sometimes wished Lady Emily would read more and talk less; while she thought it was a pity St. Maur should spoil his little girl so sadly; but the Earl remembered his sister's invariable gentleness and forgave her deficiency of mind; and Lady Emily reconciled herself to the injury Mary was likely

to receive from over indulgence, by reflecting that if St. Maur were less passionately attached to his daughter, he might take it into his head to wish for a son, and then a second marriage would take place as a matter of course.

Some time had been spent in this quiescent happiness; the habit of submission on one side, and of ascendency on the other, becoming daily more deeply rooted; when, in consequence of the awkward dilemma in which General Moubray found himself respecting his niece, it was agreed between the guardians that she should become an inmate of Selwood. Lord St. Maur, not foreseeing any probable inconvenience from the addition of a pretty girl to his family circle, readily acquiesced in the arrangement. But with his sister the case was far otherwise; for to the anxious eyes of this affectionate mother, Cecil appeared a most dangerous person, in whom her eldest daughter (now just eighteen) would find a formidable rival; to say nothing of the risk to which the Earl himself would be ex-

posed with a beautiful and fascinating young woman. And so strong a hold did this impression take upon her mind, that, notwithstanding her habitual deference to her brother's wishes, Lady Emily could not refrain from expressing her uneasiness in rather forcible terms. It was the first time that even the shadow of a difference had arisen between them, and he could scarcely credit his senses at this appearance of insubordination on the part of his usually submissive relative.

"I'm really sorry, Emily," he said, gravely, "that you should feel so much repugnance to receive Miss Moubray, nor can I understand the grounds of your dislike towards her; it is so unlike what I should have expected from the general kindness of your disposition."

"Indeed, St. Maur, I do not wish to be unkind; but I cannot help thinking that Miss Moubray's being here will be a sad disadvantage to my poor Louisa."

"A disadvantage to Louisa? And in what respect? Surely you have not heard anything

that would lead you to consider Miss Moubray an improper companion for your daughter?"

"No," replied Lady Emily, "I have heard nothing against Miss Moubray; but you must be be aware that ——"

"What?" inquired her brother, impatiently.

"That it must be a disadvantage to a girl like poor Lou., who has no fortune, to be always seen in company with a young woman of Miss Moubray's expectations; for of course all the men will flock round her, and Louisa will not have a chance; although it is of the greatest importance she should make a good marriage."

"If this is your only fear, my dear Emily, I think you may set your mind quite at rest; the two girls are so entirely dissimilar, it seems hardly possible they could ever clash; at any rate, the evil brings its antidote; for if Miss Moubray be this all-attractive person you will be the sooner released from your charge."

"Ah," replied the lady, mournfully, "I fear it will be a charge indeed."

"Not more so than the guidance of any other young lady, I suppose?" quickly retorted Lord St. Maur.

"I hope not; but I own I cannot help feeling some apprehensions. Perhaps I am wrong; I dare say I am; but I do wish Miss Moubray had been brought up in England; I have such an objection to a foreign education. And do you think that, after having spent her whole life in so desultory a manner, she will ever be satisfied with our mode of living?"

"Indeed, I do not see why she should not. You intend to pass the spring in town; here we are seldom without visiters, so that it will at least be as pleasant a life as she has been spending for the last six months with her crabbed old uncle; besides, as I before remarked, if Miss Moubray is dissatisfied it will make her more ready to find a home for herself."

"I dare say, too, she is a finished coquette, and will be doing all she can to entangle *you*."

"I hope not," replied the Earl, laughing, "for assuredly it will be to very little purpose."

"Yet you said she is reckoned handsome; don't you think so, then?"

Lord St. Maur paused; and then added, in a suppressed tone of voice, "No, Emily, I cannot say I do; I never saw Miss Moubray but once, when she reminded me so painfully of —— of Lady Selwood, that I could hardly command my feelings."

Lady Emily was thunderstruck; all her future countess fears vanished in a moment, but a still more alarming chimera took their place. "Lady Selwood! Oh, my dear brother, surely you cannot be in earnest; Lady Selwood!" and dropping the netting with which she had been engaged, Lady Emily remained for a few minutes silent and motionless. At length she exclaimed, "But is she *very* like?"

"Externally there is, undoubtedly, a very strong resemblance."

"How unfortunate! how dreadfully unfortunate!"

"Nay, Emily, you must not take this view of the case; Cecil Moubray may not be like her cousin in every respect, you know."

"Oh, but she is; I am sure she is; what will become of me?"

"My dear sister, you are scarcely rational."

"Indeed, I am quite rational. But you do not know, nobody knows, all I went through with Lady Selwood. I dare say it was very wrong, but when she died I really could not help feeling quite glad, she tormented me so."

"Yes, dearest Emily," said the Earl, affectionately, "I do know all you endured from that unhappy woman; nor have I forgotten the sweetness and gentleness of temper you manifested."

"Then can you wonder that I shrink from encountering a repetition of such misery?"

"If there were any reasonable ground for your

present apprehensions, I, your fellow sufferer, should be the last person in the world to wonder at your uneasiness; but as the matter stands, I must confess these fears appear to be perfectly chimerical. Even should Miss Moubray prove an ill-tempered, disagreeable girl, as her position in the family must render her subservient to you, it will be your own fault if you suffer any annoyance from her."

"Ah," replied Lady Emily, "it is all very well to talk of submission; a domineering spirit will always get the upper hand; and I see plainly how it is; you have taken a fancy to this tiresome girl."

"Emily," said her brother, very seriously, "as I told you a few minutes ago, the impression made by Miss Moubray on my mind was a very painful one; so much so, that I assure you solemnly I should rejoice could I avoid receiving her into my family, but as I am her guardian it is impossible."

"Why cannot that stupid old General Moubray take care of his niece himself? Surely it is more natural she should remain with him."

"Undoubtedly it is; but General Moubray has an appointment abroad, and does not possess the power of being in two places at a time."

"Well then, why does she not go with him?"

"There are reasons which render it undesirable."

"Reasons! what reasons! do tell me?"

"Something of a love affair, I believe," replied Lord St. Maur, half smiling at his sister's easily excited curiosity.

In defiance of her father's wishes, Lady Emily had made what is called a lovematch; and though her marriage was unhappy, (as indeed those marriages generally are,) she still retained a great penchant for such matters; and in consequence her feelings towards Cecil became from this moment wonderfully softened. "A love affair! Well, then, Miss Moubray is not like her cousin in everything, for Lady Selwood never was in love."

"Not with me, at any rate," rejoined her brother."

"Well, but what is the gentleman's name? and why may she not marry him? Dear St. Maur, do tell me all about it; do you think she likes him very much?"

Indeed, Emily, I am sorry I cannot gratify your curiosity; for as the subject is a delicate one, and General Moubray merely hinted that such was the case, I could not seek for more information than he chose to give; so that I know neither the gentleman's name nor the state of the lady's affections."

"Well, really I am very sorry for her, and I dare say she will feel quite unhappy at being left behind."

"I have no doubt Miss Moubray would rather accompany her uncle," replied the Earl.

Here the conversation ended; but not without leaving an uncomfortable impression on the mind of Lord St. Maur, who, while combating his sister's fears, had unconsciously imbibed some of

her prejudices; nor could he avoid considering this unprecedented display of opposition as an ill omen for the future tranquillity of his household.

Were we to examine narrowly into the causes of our different feelings, we should, I believe, be made aware, that, generally speaking, we like or dislike persons, not for any good or bad qualities they may chance to have, but as they affect our comfort or enjoyment. Thus, the man of fortune is ever surrounded by friends and admirers, not for his own intrinsic merit or accomplishments, but because the possession of wealth gives to its owner the power of contributing largely to the ease and happiness of others; while the luckless individual, whose poverty denies him this advantage, finds very few indeed who are willing to share his obscure lot. "What an ill-bred woman is Mrs. D." (says one who had long and vainly sought that lady's acquaintance.) "Dear, do you think so?" (replies her more fortunate neighbour;) "I consider her an extremely lady-

like person. I am sure she has been unwearied in her polite attentions to me." "So you have been dancing with Sir William ——; he is so rude and ill-bred; when he asks me, I always take care to be engaged," (exclaims an inveterate *wallflower*, whose hand Sir William never solicited.) "Rude!" (rejoined her fair companion;) "by no means; I have seldom met with a more sensible, gentlemanlike man. He is one of my constant partners."

And thus, Lord St. Maur conceived a feeling of dislike towards his ward. By her unfortunate likeness to her unamiable cousin, Cecil Moubray had recalled to his recollection one whom he would gladly have forgotten for ever. And, what was still worse, she had been the indirect cause of an unpleasant discussion with his sister; consequently, notwithstanding her entire innocence, from this time forth, Cecil Moubray and annoyance became, as it were, twin ideas in her guardian's imagination.

Nothing could be more unpleasant than the

journey which was to consign our heroine to her new abode. She was out of spirits, and her uncle's temper unusually morose; not without cause either, for on the very morning of their leaving town he had received a letter, in which, after many expressions of gratitude, obligation, and regret, Captain Armstrong proceeded to inform his patron that, owing to the state of his health, and some unforeseen circumstances that had arisen, he found himself under the necessity of throwing up the situation formerly accepted with so much eagerness.

Such an intimation, given when General Moubray was on the very eve of sailing, could not fail of causing him serious inconvenience. Whatever motives, therefore, Henry might have had for such capricious conduct, he was undoubtedly guilty of extreme selfishness; consequently, so long as the irritated old gentleman confined his animadversions to the real culprit, he found in his niece a silent, if not an assenting, auditor. But when, in the excess of his indignation, he

proceeded to include the whole family in the young man's delinquency, Cecil, fully convinced that neither Caroline nor Mrs. Armstrong would have, in any measure, connived at conduct so blameable, felt called upon to defend her friends from this very unjust attack, and thus drew upon herself a volley of severe and unkind personal remarks from her uncle, who had formed his own opinion on the cause of Henry's apostasy. Cecil made no reply; and her suspicious relative saw in her silence the confirmation of his preconceived notion.

Towards the evening of the second day they reached L——; and here the substitution of four bright bays, with their well-appointed riders, in place of the ill-matched posters, told the journey was drawing to a conclusion. In the course of a short time they struck into a cross road, and, after passing through some miles of rich plantation, entered the park itself. Cecil, delighted with the loveliness of the scene through which the high-spirited animals whirled

on the carriage, warmly expressed her satisfaction. The venerable oaks and beeches, the constant variety of hill and dale, the majestic river slowly winding in the distant valley, with the stately castle crowning a lofty eminence, formed altogether such a picture of grandeur and beauty as could not fail to call forth the enthusiastic admiration of one whom long absence from England had rendered a stranger to the unrivalled sylvan charms of this her native land.

"Yes," replied the General, in answer to his niece's unqualified expressions of praise, "Selwood *is* a fine place; and, as you remark, the continent presents nothing superior to such a scene as this. Since you appear so sensible to the advantages of such a residence, allow me to remind you, Cecil, that if you are not mistress of one of nearly equal beauty, you may thank your own obstinacy and folly. The physicians say, Lord N. cannot live six months; and, as you are aware, Mr. Dyneley, whom you so madly rejected, is his immediate heir."

"And yet," said Cecil, in rather a musing tone, "if the silent grave could find a voice, we might be told ——"

"Silent grave!" replied her testy uncle. "Nonsense: for goodness' sake, Cecil, do learn to express yourself in common-place language, so that a man of sense can understand you. What in the world do you suppose the grave could tell us if it were to find a tongue?"

"I merely wished to remark, that without mutual affection, all the splendour even of such a place as this would not confer happiness, or even comfort."

"And pray, why are we to look for that piece of information in a churchyard?"

"Because she, who, in this respect, would be our teacher, lies buried there: I believe my cousin found but little enjoyment at Selwood."

"The more fool she; what business had she —what business has any woman—to be unhappy with such an establishment as this?"

"Was Lady Selwood's misery voluntary?"

"Yes, it was; at any rate, it was her own doing. She chose to marry a wild young man, whose only motive in asking her was to obtain her fortune; and then she was discontented and angry because he was not always at her elbow. And by the way, Cecil, it will not be amiss to let her fate become a warning voice to you, to take care how you listen to any penny-less suitor. Remember, you are just as likely to be sought for your expectations as Lady Selwood was for her actual wealth; so, if any handsome young fellow, with nothing but the coat upon his back, begins telling you of his unalterable, disinterested love, don't stand parleying, but think of Frances, and send him to the right-about at once."

"I should, indeed, be grieved to be married from such motives. But may not a man be poor without his being mercenary?"

"Yes, certainly; I suppose the thing *may* be; but, for my part, I think it very improbable; and you will be a great fool if you run the risk."

"And how am I to avoid it?"

"By marrying a gentleman whose wealth and station place him above suspicion. One to whom *your* future fortune could be no temptation,—Mr. Dyneley, for instance."

"But even the owner of this vast domain married for convenience."

"Yes; but *he* was in debt, Dyneley is not."

"Well, my dear uncle, there is no use thinking of Mr. Dyneley. You know the business is at an end,—he would not have me now."

"I am not so sure of that, Cecil. I saw him only the day before we left London; and, from the manner in which he mentioned you, I've a great notion the match might still be brought about. And remember, my dear girl, if he should renew his attentions you will gratify me by accepting him."

"Uncle," said Cecil, raising her soft eyes beseechingly to his, "I could not love Mr. Dyneley. Do not, therefore, I entreat you,—pray, do not tell me to marry him."

General Moubray gave a sort of sigh at this renewed proof of his niece's obstinacy; and then replied, "I'm afraid, Cecil, you are a very silly, romantic girl; but you are young, and will, I hope, grow wiser. At any rate, as you lay such a stress on loving or not loving, it will be as well to bear in mind that even to men, who have the privilege of choice, it is seldom granted to marry the woman they prefer; and still less frequently to women, who can but refuse; so that, in resolving only to marry where your affections are engaged, you, in fact, make almost a determination to die an old maid; and I suppose you would hardly like that. Eh, Cecil?"

"I think it would, at all events, be better than an unhappy union."

"Perhaps so; but experience shews that marriages founded on prudence and esteem are, generally speaking, happy; while those you young ladies are so fond of making, I mean *love* matches, generally turn out to be no such thing."

They reached the Castle, and were ushered

speedily into the drawing-room, and after going through the usual introductory forms, Cecil hurried to her apartment to make the necessary change in her dress. She re-appeared quickly, for it was late, and she was well aware that an over-dressed dinner is far more objectionable than an under-dressed young lady. During Miss Moubray's absence, brief as it had been, two persons of extremely different appearance had joined the party; one, a slight, elegant looking child, about seven years of age, whose dark glancing eyes, and curling raven hair, plainly bespoke her affinity to the lord of the mansion; while the other (Sir Thomas Warham) instantly recalled to the mind of our heroine the fat, good-tempered looking person who had been mistaken by Elizabeth for Lord St. Maur.

The impression produced on the different members of the circle was altogether rather in favour of their new inmate; Sir Thomas, being somewhat of an epicure, pronounced an eulogium on Cecil's good sense in making so expeditious

a toilette. The Misses Warham were certain, from her manner in refusing to contribute her share in the musical portion of the evening's amusement, that she was not a good musician; and would be no rival that way at any rate; while Lady Emily's mind was considerably relieved by finding the dreaded resemblance to her unhappy sister-in-law infinitely less striking than she had been led to expect.

Lord St. Maur took no share in the conversation to which these various opinions gave rise; for, in fact, there had been a little something in his ward's manner towards him which he had found excessively offensive; it might be timidity; for that unpleasant feeling will sometimes shroud itself under the appearance of proud reserve; but there was no denying it had much more the semblance of an incipient intention of setting him at defiance. To most minds such an idea would have appeared absolutely ludicrous; but on Lord St. Maur, accustomed so long to his sister's almost servile submission, the effect was

highly disagreeable. The last hypothesis was, I regret to say, correct; for, in spite of many remonstrances and much good advice from the sensible and amiable Caroline, Cecil entered Selwood fully determined to obey her guardian only when his wishes and her pleasure coincided. Had he treated her with gentleness, this very foolish and improper resolution would have given way like a rope of sand; for Cecil's disposition was peculiarly alive to kindness; but, unhappily, he was led to adopt an entirely different line of conduct, and all her proud and wayward feelings being thus awakened, she became daily more averse to his control; and even while conciliating every other member of the family, contrived to render herself so obnoxious to her guardian that he lost all patience, and vowed, emphatically, that nothing should ever, in future, tempt him to undertake such a charge.

Pride is a fearful failing, not only from its own native deformity, but as being the cause of so much that is contrary to the will of God and

hurtful to our fellow creatures. Why are we angry? Is it not because of our offended pride? What leads to envy? An overweening sense of merit, which will not bear even the supposed excellence of another. What is ambition, but a ramification of the same evil root? Why are we vindictive, discontented, slow to acknowledge error, unwilling to renounce opinions, even when known to be erroneous? Simply because we are proud. Oh reader! Is not this so? Can you not trace the source of these, and more than these, to the one baneful cause? But perhaps you will deny the existence of so much sinfulness; *you* are neither covetous nor vindictive; envy and discontent form no part of *your* character; *you* know nothing of ambition nor excessive wrath. It may be so; yet are you proud! Yes, yes, you are; pride lurks in every human heart; then watch it well, or rather, seek to cast it from you; for be assured, that poisoned root waits but the fitting time and hour to bring forth and ripen its accursed fruits.

CHAPTER VII.

The day which followed our heroine's arrival at Selwood was bright, sunny, and warm, such as sometimes happen in the early spring, cheating us into the belief that summer itself is close at hand. The glistening dew-drops, the gay young sunbeams, the blithe birds singing as they "reared their leafy homes;" and the mild air laden with perfume, all told of happiness, and love, and joy. But Cecil's saddened spirit gave no echo to these gladsome sounds; her eye rested upon the landscape, but she heeded not its beauty, and vainly for her the lark, the red-

breast, or the mavis, poured its liquid song. A weight was at her heart, her colour came and went, and it was with difficulty she could in any measure control her feelings as she sat apparently listening to Lady Emily, but in reality watching the door of the apartment, whose opening would be the prelude to her taking a long farewell of a relative, to whom, notwithstanding the irritability of his temper, she was affectionately attached.

General Moubray, aware of the disadvantage his niece might sustain from the publication of her flirtation with Armstrong, had, as Lord St. Maur informed his sister, merely glanced at the matter; nor did he entertain any intention of alluding again to the subject; for the old gentleman, being sceptical as to the constancy of lovers, was quite convinced that, were the young people fairly separated, and Cecil placed in a scene where nothing could remind her of Henry, she would speedily lose all trace of her imagined attachment. It would not, therefore, he consi-

dered, be necessary to give the Earl any caution on the subject. But Armstrong's sudden resignation of his appointment induced him to alter his resolution, and General Moubray, thinking it impossible the young man would have acted in so extraordinary a manner had he not had efficient reasons for remaining in England, felt it his duty to lay the whole subject before Cecil's guardian, as perhaps the only means by which this very improper marriage might be prevented.

The account of suspicions, fears, and proofs, lost nothing in its colouring from the circumstance of the testy veteran being, naturally enough, exceedingly incensed with both the young people; and Lord St. Maur's brow grew darker and darker as he listened to a narrative which, it must be confessed, did not present Cecil in the most favourable point of view.

"And do you really think, General," he exclaimed, at length, "do you indeed imagine Miss Moubray has connived at conduct so extremely improp—— unlooked for; and consequently

been the means of causing so much inconvenience to you, her relative and benefactor? It is hardly credible.

"Your lordship mistakes me," replied the General, slightly reddening; "I did not say (at least I did not *mean* to say) my niece had *connived* at Captain Armstrong's conduct; I merely intended to express my conviction that he must have grounds to think he has obtained considerable influence over Cecil, as I cannot suppose he would be fool enough to give up such an appointment unless he saw good reason to imagine his remaining in England would be pleasing to her; and, probably, he hopes that during my absence he may succeed in prevailing on my niece to engage herself to him; but," continued he (raising his voice), "the young gentleman will find himself outwitted; for if Cecil does so forget herself, not one farthing of my fortune shall she ever see. A low-born fellow, without one shilling to rub against another!"

"Of course you have informed Miss Mou-

bray of your disapprobation of this gentleman's addresses ?"

"No, I have not; for women, as you and I know, are such wayward creatures, that to tell them you object to anything is often the very way to make them do it. If, therefore, my niece *is* to play the fool with this coxcomb, at any rate it shall not be said that I was goose enough to put it into her head."

"Then you have no reason to suppose there is a positive understanding between the parties? —as yet, no proposal has been made ?"

"No, I do not think he has had assurance enough for that; the great object will be to prevent it; for if once he can persuade Cecil he has made this sacrifice on her account, she will, I have no doubt, think it incumbent on her to return what she would consider such disinterested affection; for my niece, I am sorry to say, has got her head full of romantic notions, and talked yesterday until I was nearly sick, of—of——." General Moubray hesitated; he felt he was on

dangerous ground, and Lord St. Maur, wholly unconscious of the real subject of the conversation, subjoined, "Love in a cottage, I suppose; the usual dream of nineteen?"

"Yes, something to that effect. I was absolutely provoked, and cannot for the life of me imagine where she can have learnt such nonsense; not from me, certainly, nor from her mother, I should think; however, be that as it may, Cecil has picked up these absurd ideas, and therefore I am more anxious to prevent any communication with Armstrong; so there must be no meeting, no writing, no intercourse whatever."

"But how, General, can this be effected? At Miss Moubray's age, it will be very difficult to adopt a line of conduct towards her which would lead to such a result. How can I prevent her seeing, or even corresponding, with the gentleman, if she chooses it?"

"How?" asked the General; "by shewing your decided disapprobation of his visits,

or even denying him the house should he persevere."

"Would it not be better to hold some communication yourself with Captain Armstrong? Do you imagine he would persist in his attentions if he were fully aware of your objection to the match? Surely, the threat of disinheriting your niece would be sufficient to damp the ardour of his pursuit."

"To say the truth, I have thought of it; but I question whether he would believe me; young people, you know, are apt to be sanguine; besides, it might lead him to fancy Cecil likes him, conceited puppy that he is. Moreover, I do not know where to find him; he talks of the necessity of an immediate return to the continent, —to get away from his creditors, I suppose."

"It is really an unpleasant business," remarked the Earl, thoughtfully; and then, after a pause, "you said, I believe, this young man was in the army; do you know to what regiment he belonged?"

"Let me see, was it——? No;—yes it was, I remember now; it certainly was the —— Lancers. He's a good looking fellow," continued the veteran; "very agreeable, too, and I liked him well enough myself, before I knew the game he meant to play. Perhaps you may remember a tall, fair young man, who dined at my house in the Regent's Park the day I had the honour of your company."

Lord St. Maur did recollect; but his memory carried him farther back than General Moubray's dinner party; for Armstrong, it reminded him, had been the name of one of his lady's most obsequious attendants; one, whom report said, would even have supplanted Captain Danby but for her sudden removal from Brighton. In this respect, however, Frances was belied. Henry, then a very young man, was the son of a family friend, and as such alone had been noticed by Lady Selwood.

"But after all," continued General Moubray, remarking the great and increasing discom-

posure of his companion—"after all, we are perhaps taking too serious a view of the business. Cecil, while under your charge, will be in a sphere so entirely different from that in which he moves, that really it is ten to one if they ever meet; and I dare say she will quite have forgotten him at the end of a few months."

"There is no danger, I hope, of anything clandestine?" inquired the Earl.

"None in the world; Cecil is a high-spirited girl, and, like other women, will have her own way when she can get it; but she is entirely above deceit, and I believe never told a falsehood in her life. No, no; my niece, I am convinced, will do nothing clandestine; if she does suffer herself to be inveigled into an engagement, she is much more likely to attempt to carry the matter with a high hand. But I cannot think she will be so mad as to engage herself to this fellow; especially as she is fully aware that the consent of both her guardians is necessary to her marrying. I do therefore hope, that if he

should have the insolence to propose, she will have sense enough to refuse him; especially, as I before remarked, any little influence he may have obtained will speedily pass away when they are no longer in the habit of meeting; and in that respect I feel the utmost confidence in your lordship's judgment and sense of propriety."

"Whilst Miss Moubray remains under my roof, there is, certainly, very little probability of her seeing much of Captain Armstrong. But are there no relations, no mutual convenient friends, who would be kind enough to assist in carrying on the intercourse?"

"None," replied the General; "Cecil has lived so long abroad that she has scarcely even an acquaintance in this country."

"But did you not say something of an intimacy between the families?"

"That is of no importance. The Armstrongs live entirely on the continent; and are not at all likely to be in England for some time. And

even if they should come over, there is little probability of a meeting. Lady Emily's circle of acquaintance would hardly, I should think, embrace persons of that description; and of course I should not approve of Cecil's visiting any one with whom her ladyship is not acquainted."

"Is that to be taken literally, General?"

"Undoubtedly."

"So that, if Miss Moubray received an invitation from any friend, you would not wish her to accept it? For there, I think, would be the danger."

"I agree with you entirely; while, therefore, Cecil remains under your charge, her leaving your roof, even for a few hours, must not be thought of."

"And will Miss Moubray be willing to submit to so much restraint?"

"She *must* be willing," cried the General; "and if she is *not*, it will be worse for her, I can tell her. I have no idea of insubordination in a

woman. But indeed I don't think Cecil *will* give you any trouble on that score, for she really is a good girl after all, a little wayward, or headstrong, perhaps, but that's not to be wondered at; has it from both sides of the family; the Moubrays have always been a hot-headed race; so have the Huttons. ["I can answer for one at any rate" thought the Earl.] Then her mother spoilt her dreadfully: but you must let her see, from the first, you are and will be master; and I'll be bound she'll soon find out the way to obey you. As the Persians say, 'You must kill the cat upon the wedding day.'" And General Moubray laughed at what he considered a happy hit: but Lord St. Maur saw nothing ludicrous in the prospect of taking charge of a headstrong, wild, romantic girl; so he looked grave, and his companion added, "If, however, my niece should shew the slightest symptoms of insubordination, pray send me notice, and I warrant I'll soon bring her to her senses. A pretty

thing, indeed, a woman not choosing to obey orders !"

"And it will be quite impossible for Miss Moubray to accompany you ?"

"Out of the question, my dear Lord ; I sail early next week, so that it would be utterly impracticable to make anything like the necessary preparations. And indeed," continued the General, looking at his watch, "I fear I must be going : I believe my carriage is at the door ; yes, I see it is ; so, if you will allow me, I will just take leave of my poor little niece, and be off. I really feel quite ashamed of having trespassed so long on your valuable time."

Never since Lady Selwood's death had Lord St. Maur felt so thoroughly annoyed as he did that morning, while slowly traversing the vestibule on his return to the library, after having witnessed the departure of his guest. And as all Cecil's delinquencies, supposed or real, together with the anxiety arising from the charge of such a person, presented themselves to his imagination,

he felt ready to hang himself for the willingness with which, in the first instance, he had consented to the arrangement. As for her ignorance of Armstrong's motives, Lord St. Maur did not believe one word of it; on the contrary, he felt satisfied she must have been well aware of the part her admirer meant to act in the scheme, which had entailed so much inconvenience on her benefactor. What fearful ingratitude did such conduct evince; such a want, too, of principle, and delicacy; *that*, however, was not wonderful, for, as Lady Emily had remarked, what could be expected from a girl who had spent all her life in running over the continent. A foreign education is the very —— we won't say what. Then—who could say where the mischief would end? What would ensure Louisa and Anna from contamination? Might not they also think proper to discover a Captain Armstrong among the dragoon officers who were quartered in the neighbouring town? Even to Mary, his

idolized Mary, Cecil's baneful influence might extend ; not in the way of lovers, certainly—she was too young for that—but deceit and obstinacy may be taught at any age.

Lord St. Maur bit his lips with vexation while contemplating the possible, or, as he thought, the inevitable consequences of Miss Moubray's residence in his family ; and his uneasiness was heightened by the conviction that this was a case in which Lady Emily would prove a very inefficient assistant ; indeed, so little confidence did he place in her judgment, that he resolved to make her no party to the unpleasant communication he had that morning received.

The Earl paused for a second before the half-opened door of one of the sitting-rooms, and his brow became more contracted as he took a rapid glance at its inmates ; and yet the sight which met his eye was one few could have seen unmoved ; for artless infancy and graceful youth were there ; Lady Mary, to whom

sorrow was a novel sight, seeking by every childish endearment to divert her cousin's grief, while Cecil, grateful for the sympathy of the kind-hearted child, tenderly caressed her little comforter. Already did his worse fears seem about to be realized; Miss Moubray would gain an influence over the affectionate little girl, and Mary, his pure, his guileless, gentle Mary, would become artful, headstrong, disobedient.

Lord St. Maur could not endure the prospect of such a change, and resolved to do everything in his power to check this inauspicious intimacy, but in vain. Lady Mary, although naturally of a reserved disposition, conceived a violent fancy for her new relation; she followed her like a shadow, and was never happy when separated from her. When Cecil awoke in the morning, Mary was at her bedside; if Cecil walked, Mary would hold her hand; if she drove, room must be found for Mary in the same carriage; and as Miss Moubray rode well and frequently, her indefatigable little

friend allowed her father no peace until she gained his promise of a pony, that she might ride as well as Cecil.

He was surprised and annoyed; and perhaps would not have been better pleased with his daughter's predilection, had he known in what Cecil's principal attraction consisted. Lady Mary St. Maur had no governess; for the Earl, participating in the dislike most men entertain towards that hapless portion of the community, resolved to delay as long as possible the unwelcome moment which would consign his petted darling to the influence of another, while Lady Emily, whose apprehensions of a second wife extended even to ladies of this description, readily engaged to assist in the education of her niece; her daughters, too, were willing to contribute their share; and St. Maur took the more solid part of the business into his own hands. Division of labour, however, is not always a benefit, and so it proved in this instance; for Mary, notwithstanding considerable

natural abilities, learnt nothing. Lady Emily was too indolent and good-tempered to prove an efficient instructress; the Misses Warham preferred their own harmony to their pupil's discord, while the object of all this solicitude thought it infinitely pleasanter to chatter with her indulgent father than to puzzle over the rudiments of the Latin grammar, and would spend hours seated upon his knee, her head resting in his bosom, and her dark expressive eyes fastened on his, whilst he repeated again and again the well-known tale, or satisfied the eager curiosity, and smiled at the strange conjectures, of a mind of unusual intelligence.

But there was one topic which made no part of this intercourse. Notwithstanding the entire freedom with which the artless child laid open every thought, and wish, and feeling, there was one reserve. Her mother's name was never mentioned, or if by chance it did occur, Mary became aware, by the altered expression of her father's countenance, as well as his anxiety to

change the subject, that it was one to which she ought not to recur; in fact, on this point Lord St. Maur always found himself perplexed. Could he—could any one, speak highly of such a character as Lady Selwood's; and yet, who would expose the failings of a mother to her orphan child? Others participated in this feeling, so that, turn where she would for information on a subject so interesting to her young affections, Mary could only learn that her mamma had been beautiful and rich.

There is in every mind a disposition to deify relations over whom the grave has closed. In children, especially, where the imagination and feelings are less under the control of reason than at a maturer age, this tendency obtains considerable sway; and in the present instance, the natural bias being greatly strengthened by the air of mystery in which her mother's memory was shrouded, Mary regarded her deceased parent with sentiments of veneration hardly to be looked for in one so young. And

this it was which laid the basis of her attachment to our heroine. Lady Selwood had been rich and beautiful,—so was Cecil; then she heard (for children hear everything) of the personal resemblance between them, and Miss Moubray was the only relation of her mother's Mary had ever seen; in fact, to Mary's young imagination Cecil appeared her living representative. "Then Cecil was so good-natured, and kind, and knew such a number of pretty stories; true stories, about robbers and caves in Italy." (Mary was quite determined to go abroad when she was twelve years old; and her father as determined she should do no such thing.) Mary was certain that had her mamma been alive she would have been exactly like Cecil, and therefore she loved her new favourite with all her little heart and soul.

Had Cecil listened to Caroline's advice and endeavoured to conciliate her guardian, Lord St. Maur must have viewed his daughter's inclination for her cousin's society with at any

rate kindly feelings; for notwithstanding all his disposition to cavil and find fault, he could not deny that Mary derived benefit rather than injury from associating with his ward; but unhappily, in the first ebullition of annoyance, the Earl betrayed his disapproval; and from that moment, Cecil, whose pride took fire at the supposition of her not being considered a fit companion for her own relation, rather encouraged than checked Mary's excessive affection; and as previous to this the demonstration of attachment had been chiefly confined to one side, Lord St. Maur, being very clear sighted, naturally enough attributed her kindness to his little girl, not to affection, but to a wish of thwarting him. Nor was this the only instance in which such motives were imputed to her.

Lord St. Maur was by no means a religious man; but he considered a certain measure of external piety necessary, even desirable, for the well-being of society, and accordingly made his appearance, surrounded by the members of

his household, regularly at morning service every sabbath, especially while in the country. Here, however, his devotion ended, for he deemed the second service not only useless, but pernicious, as tending to Methodism, of which his lordship entertained a most orthodox horror ever since he had been cheated, to a considerable amount, by a steward professing serious principles; and as the Earl's slightest opinion was received as a law by the submissive Lady Emily, she would as soon have thought of flying as of going twice to church herself, or suffering her daughters to do so.

With Cecil, however, the case was otherwise. The daughter of a clergyman of the church of England, she had been educated with much respect for the ceremonials of that establishment; and Mrs. Moubray, whose long illness had not been destitute of the comforts and consolations of our most holy faith, had earnestly sought to impress upon her daughter's mind, that fair and

full of hope as were her worldly prospects, there did yet exist still brighter joys and more enduring happiness.

At this time, Cecil, it must be allowed, possessed but little of the *spirit* of religion, yet she reverenced its forms; and consequently, on the second Sunday after her arrival at Selwood, Lord St. Maur had the gratification of meeting his ward and her attendant satellite as they returned from the afternoon service. On the following Sabbath, having learnt that a repetition of the offence was intended, he summoned his daughter to the library.

"But, papa, it is time to get my things on; the bell is ringing, and Cecil is ready. Let me go, or she will go without me."

"Well," replied the Earl, "it is of no consequence if she does. I do not wish you to go again to church."

"Why not, papa?"

"You have been there once to-day, and that is quite enough."

"Cecil says it is not; that if once were enough there would not be two church times."

"You are too young, Mary, to understand these things. If Miss Moubray chooses to be unlike other people, she may go twenty times, but you will stay with me; come, let us look at these pretty pictures together."

Lady Mary obeyed; but as her remaining was not voluntary, neither the "pretty pictures" nor Lord St. Maur's caresses could reconcile her to the detention.

"Oh, papa, how long Cecil is! When do you think the church will be out?" said she, looking wistfully towards the window which commanded a view of the grey ivy-hung tower. "I do so wish she would come. She promised, after church, to tell me such a beautiful story about people who always wear veils and live in a house where they can't get out; and about one who was shut up in a wall by cruel *monkies* —"

"Monks, I suppose you mean, my dear," in-

terrupted her father, smiling in spite of himself at this animated display of his daughter's lately acquired knowledge.

"Yes, monks. Oh, papa, wasn't it a cruel thing? And Cecil says it is quite true; do you think it is?"

"I am afraid such things have been done; but tell me, Mary, have you never heard such tales before?"

"Perhaps I have, but not such pretty ones. And then Cecil has shewn me what they wear, —a *rosemary*, all made in gold; you can't think how beautiful it is. Oh, they are coming out of church at last, and there she is." And Lady Mary darted off, leaving her father to determine in his own mind what motives a girl of nineteen could possibly have for going twice to church. Sincerity was out of the question. What sincerity could there be in the religion of a young lady who had behaved as she had done? Was she, then, a hypocrite? No; for hypo-

crites (or, as he would have expressed himself, Methodists) were invariably coarse in their manners, and vulgar in their persons; while Miss Moubray was extremely *recherchée* both in her appearance and dress. Then it could be nothing but a spirit of contradiction, and a cross-grained wish of proving how little deference she felt for his opinions. Nevertheless, when on the following Sunday Mary coaxingly asked leave to go with Cecil, it was not refused; perhaps because the Earl thought, that to oppose his daughter's wishes would but strengthen them; perhaps he found it difficult to say no to one he loved so fondly; or, perhaps, because he did not think it mattered, at Mary's age, whether she went or not.

But this fresh proof of opposition from Miss Moubray failed not to increase her guardian's prejudices; and daily did his manner become more dictatorial, and his voice sharper, when obliged by the necessary forms of hospitality to address her. Cecil had no suspicion of the cause

of this disagreeable conduct; but it was hardly likely that such uncourteous behaviour should be either unheeded or unresented by a person who had hitherto found herself an object of almost universal and devoted attention; and she marked her sense of his ill-breeding by an increased coldness, or rather haughtiness, of demeanour, and by avoiding his society as much as possible.

Lord St. Maur's vanity now became piqued. He had been, since the early days of his widowhood, a sort of target, at which all the unmarried ladies of his acquaintance, whose beauty, rank, or wealth, offered the slightest prospect of success, directed their well-aimed shafts; and although the invulnerability of their prey had rendered the chase hopeless, and it was a received and well-acknowledged truth that all such labour had been, and ever would be, bestowed in vain; there were few who did not consider themselves flattered, if not honoured, by his notice. Sweet was the smile his greeting conjured up; happy the lady he handed to the

dinner-table; and when, by a rare accident, he mingled in the dance, happy, thrice happy, his selected partner.

And Lord St. Maur, though naturally rather proud than vain, not being insensible to the homage so freely offered, was excessively nettled by the unconcern and indifference of Miss Moubray's manner; more particularly, as towards every other individual of the family Cecil manifested a desire to please. She listened patiently to Lady Emily's insipid conversation; laughed and talked with the Misses Warham; was alternately Mary's instructress and playfellow; and always willing and ready to play chess or backgammon with Sir Thomas Warham, who was an almost constant visiter at the Castle.

Cecil was a great favourite with the last-mentioned person, and in return for his partiality spoke warmly in his praise, never omitting to add, when Lord St. Maur was present, a glowing eulogium on the Baronet's good temper and

kindness; and the Earl wondered at the perversion of taste which led a beautiful and well-connected girl to bestow her affections on such a man as Armstrong, and her esteem on a person like Sir Thomas, who, after all, had nothing but good temper to recommend him.

CHAPTER VIII.

About a month after Miss Moubray's debût at Selwood, Lord St. Maur went up to town to attend his parliamentary duties, and, in the course of a few days, was followed by the ladies of the family. Cecil did not, in pursuance of her uncle's directions, take lessons in singing; for, as both the Misses Warham were excellent musicians, she thought any addition to the family concert, on her part, would be considered superfluous. She accompanied Lady Emily and her eldest daughter to some balls and parties of various descriptions, and to the opera alternately with

Louisa; for, as everybody knows, the boxes at that place of public resort are intended to accommodate only two ladies at a time. It is also known to everybody that Saturday is *the* night, yet Cecil preferred Tuesday. Louisa thought this odd; Lady Emily said, it was uncommonly good-natured in her to give up the best night; while Lord St. Maur suspected (and he was right) that Miss Moubray would not have been so very accommodating but for the circumstance of his rarely honouring the King's Theatre on a Tuesday evening, while on Saturday he seldom failed to be there.

She met and exchanged visits with Elizabeth Hartfield, who, from old association of ideas, appeared now a far more agreeable person than in former days; and those were the pleasantest parties, in Cecil's estimation, which afforded an opportunity of conversing with Mr. Wickham.

"How is it we are so few to-day?" inquired the Earl, as they proceeded to the dinner-table. "Is Miss Moubray not well?"

"Yes, quite well; but she is dining out."

Lord St. Maur looked both vexed and surprised; and Lady Emily continued—

"We met Lady Hartfield and her daughter at the exhibition to day, and Cecil went home with them. Indeed, I believe they are going to the theatre; Louisa, didn't you say so?"

"Yes, mamma, I heard Lady Hartfield tell Cecil she had succeeded in getting a private box."

Lord St. Maur made no comment, but he was considerably discomposed; for he recollected that at General Moubray's memorable dinner-party, the "fair, good-looking young man," had belonged to a Mrs. Hartfield; there was consequently much reason to fear, that in spite of all General Moubray's warnings, and his own watchfulness, Cecil and her admirer would meet; nay, might be at that very moment in all the luxury of a tête-à-tête; a species of amusement for which private boxes are especially adapted.

A few days afterwards, between the hours of

twelve and one, an ambiguous sort of knock was heard at the door of Lord St. Maur's residence, and presently the groom of the chambers appeared, holding in his hand a small card, which bore in written characters a lady's name, whom he announced as Miss Stout.

"Miss Stout!" exclaimed the Earl, almost starting from the easy chair in which he had ensconced himself. "Who can she possibly be, and what does she want?"

"Miss Stout!" repeated Lady Emily; "who can she be? I am sure I never heard of such a person. I hope it's not a swindler! Mrs. Brownlow was robbed the other day by a woman who came up under the pretence of asking charity. Don't let her in; pray don't let her in."

"Perhaps, mamma," observed Louisa, with a slight toss of her head, "it is some acquaintance of Miss Moubray's."

"Let her come up at any rate," said the Earl.

"St. Maur, how can you be so imprudent; we shall be robbed, depend upon it."

"Nonsense," replied her brother.

"Miss Stout," said the amused domestic, as he pompously ushered into the room a young person whose general appearance was entirely at variance with her appellation; for she was thin and pale, and so much overcome by nervous agitation, that the Earl, pitying her embarrassment, handed her a chair, on the corner of which she essayed to place herself, but overshooting the mark came seated on the ground; she was picked up, replaced, and Lady Emily kindly enough demanded her business.

A faltering inquiry for Miss Moubray being made, Mary was despatched to inform Cecil of her distinguished visiter; and then there was an awkward silence, for, in fact, no one knew what to say. The individual who had caused all this surprise belonged evidently to a lower grade of society; she was dressed in deep, but shabby mourning, and on her arm hung a large black bag, the tarnished clasp of which she opened and shut perpetually, to the infinite annoyance of

Lord St. Maur, whose nerves were particularly irritable that morning, in consequence of his ward having announced an engagement to spend a long day with Lady Hartfield, early in the ensuing week. Lady Mary returned, not, however, accompanied by her cousin, but with a request that Miss Stout would go up to Cecil's dressing-room; accordingly, preceded by Mary, this doubtful visiter shuffled away.

"Upon my word," thought Lord St. Maur, as he watched their departure, "it must be confessed Miss Moubray makes herself perfectly at home in my house; and who is this questionable person, I should like to know? An emissary, perhaps, a convenient messenger from the absent lover; and that confounded bag an admirable vehicle for the correspondence; and yet," continued he, rather softening at the recollection of Stout's nervous agitation, "I may be wronging the poor young woman; she certainly does not look like a confidante in a love affair; how I do wish General Moubray had kept his fancies to

himself, instead of filling my mind with these constant suspicions and fears. And after all, it's of no use in the world; if Miss Moubray has made up her mind to marry Armstrong, neither he nor I can prevent it; for, I'm daily more and more convinced, you may as well attempt to turn a river from its course as an obstinate woman from her purpose. It's a thousand pities, too, she should be so perverse, for she really is a very pretty creature."

Lord St. Maur, being much occupied with his own reflections, took no notice of a sort of soliloquy, in which Lady Emily descanted on the inconvenience of being subjected to other people's visiters; but his attention was at length aroused, and he inquired the cause of her complaint.

"I was only observing," she replied, "how very disagreeable it is to be always having to entertain people one doesn't know; and Miss Moubray really has so many acquaintances!"

"Indeed!" replied the Earl, "I was not

aware of it; pray, who are they all? For, with the exception of this young woman, and Lady Hartfield, *I* have seen none of Miss Moubray's visiters."

"Oh, St. Maur, that's because you are so seldom at home!"

"Well, but who are they?"

"Why, there is Lady Louisa Hampden; and the Hartfields; and this person, whoever she may be; and Mr. Wickham."

"I see no objection, Emily, to the first lady you have mentioned, indeed, I have always heard her spoken of as an agreeable woman. As for the others——"

"Oh," interrupted his sister, "I don't mean to complain of Lady Louisa, I dare say I should like her well enough; besides, we've only exchanged cards; nor, indeed, of Lady Hartfield; but Mr. Wickham pays such long visits I quite dread seeing him come into the room; and if by any chance I have an engagement, and want particularly to get out early, he is sure to come,

and sit the whole morning; and you know its the most tiresome thing in the world to be kept at home when one wishes to get out."

"But," replied the Earl, "are there no means of civilly informing an unwelcome visiter that his company is not desired? No short replies, no forbidding looks, no pauses in the conversation, which would explain your feelings? Some ladies would not even scruple to speak their wishes upon such an occasion. How is it that you cannot make Mr. Wickham understand how little welcome he is?"

"Indeed," said Louisa, "I don't think it much matters what mamma said, or did, while Cecil behaves as she does."

"Cecil behaves as she does? What do you mean by that, Louisa?"

"I only meant she is always so glad to see Mr. Wickham, and takes so much pains to amuse him, that he could hardly get away, even if he wished it. I never saw a girl pay so much

court to a man: I'm sure I would not for the whole world!"

"That is very unlike her usual conduct," remarked her uncle.

"But it's quite true, I can assure you."

"Indeed, St. Maur," said Lady Emily, "Louisa is right. I don't mean to say that Cecil pays absolute court to Mr. Wickham; but she really does seem uncommonly pleased with his visits; and I suspect," added her ladyship, looking very wise, "that *he* must be the hero of the tale. *You* know what I mean."

"I'm afraid, Emily, your suspicions are hardly correct; for, as Mr. Wickham is a man of fair fortune, he would be a very good match for Miss Moubray; one to which her uncle would, I should imagine, gladly consent. In fact, it is quite as good as any she has a right to expect. But do you really think she likes him?"

"I only know Cecil seems delighted to see him, and, as Louisa says, talks all the time.

Yesterday they had a dish of politics; and would you believe it? they are both Whigs! I was not so much surprised to hear Mr. Wickham say *he* was a Whig; for I know some men are; but that a young lady like Cecil should hold such opinions did astonish me; I declare, I could scarcely believe my ears. Don't you think it very extraordinary, St. Maur?"

But St. Maur was not in the least surprised; for, reflecting that he was a high Tory, and Armstrong most probably a Radical, it appeared quite natural Miss Moubray should be a Whig at least?

"Well, I don't know, it appeared very strange to me; but perhaps it's owing to her having been so much abroad. And then, what can that woman possibly want? It is so odd in Cecil to send for her up to her dressing-room; just as if it were something mysterious. It's well I think, if she is not robbed. A most suspicious looking person she was; falling off her chair, too: I should'nt wonder if she were intoxicated, she

looked as if she had just come out of a public-house. And did you observe that great bag? I'm really afraid she must have some bad intention. Louisa, my dear, do see if my watch is on that table, I left it there a short time ago; and my smelling-bottle; what can have become of my smelling-bottle? Oh, here it is! It's very lucky, St. Maur, that you were here; she might have robbed us all."

Shortly after, Cecil entered the room, and Lady Emily's fears were removed, by learning that Miss Stout was not a swindler, but a miniature painter; who had been recommended to Miss Moubray's notice by a friend at Paris, to whom her distress had made her known. The father of the unfortunate individual held an inferior situation in the Excise office, and observing (as he thought) evidence of genius in his eldest daughter, had educated her for an artist; and to ensure every prospect of success, had sent her to Italy, that she might receive the finishing stroke to her studies in that land which had been the

cradle of her art. But his death, which took place shortly after she arrived at Florence, not only deprived her of the possibility of remaining abroad, but by the sudden stoppage of her slender supplies, reduced her to a state of almost entire destitution; and, as the poor girl told Cecil, with tears of gratitude, "she must have perished, but for that angel, Mrs. Hartfield." Caroline heard that a young country-woman was in distress, and, ever alive to the wants of others, contrived to raise a sufficient fund to enable her to reach Paris; there she was received with equal kindness by Mrs. Armstrong, who smoothed her way to England, and gave the letter which occasioned the scene we have been describing.

The father's death had plunged the whole family into distress, and Miss Stout, relinquishing the higher branches of her profession, endeavoured now to gain her livelihood by taking likenesses. Cecil hoped the melancholy tale

might interest those who had so largely the power of assisting the efforts of a really deserving individual; but she was disappointed.

Lady Emily, being one of those persons whose benevolence is entirely passive, thought the utterance of a few interjectional expressions of surprise and pity quite sufficient; while Lord St. Maur, though naturally liberal-minded, and willing to relieve distress, or assist genius, felt that, circumstanced as he was with regard to his ward, it would not be judicious to encourage a person so much connected with the Armstrong party; he therefore made no offer of assistance; and Cecil, sickened at what appeared such want of feeling, could not refrain from a silent aspiration—that should she, at any future period of her life, become the possessor of wealth and influence, she might never be guilty of selfishly withholding from others less favoured the blessings and comforts of which they might stand in need. But her benevolence did not stop here;

she endeavoured to interest Lady Louisa Hampden on behalf of her protégée, and resolved, at all events, to have her own likeness taken.

To meet the convenience of both parties, the sittings, which were frequent, took place in Miss Moubray's dressing-room, and as Lord St. Maur, notwithstanding the contempt in which he held female hearts and female understandings, had latterly become fond of loitering in the drawing-room, he not unfrequently had the satisfaction of meeting poor Miss Stout, in her progress up or down stairs. His lordship's equanimity, however, was but little disturbed by her apparition; compassionating the confusion and tremor his presence never failed to occasion, he endeavoured to dismiss from his imagination what his reason told him might be a most unjust surmise. But where suspicion has once entered the mind, it is hardly possible to preserve the judgment unbiassed, and it must be acknowledged, that more than once, as the Earl stood aside to admit of her passing, he felt a strong

inclination to twitch away the ominous black bag, and make himself master of its contents.

Not long after the unhappy artist's first visit, he observed various little trinkets of foreign manufacture, one of which, in particular—an ornament for the watch, containing light brown hair, was evidently much prized by Miss Moubray; it is true these tokens of remembrance were but of little intrinsic value, but they were quite as costly as a half-pay officer could afford to offer; and from a half-pay officer, Lord St. Maur was much inclined to fear they came. And when he finally learnt that, in addition to other presents, Cecil had paid an inordinate price for the miniature, which proved a wretched daub, the apprehension that Miss Stout had been something more than an object of benevolence received augmented strength.

Shortly before she left town, two offers of marriage were made to Cecil; the first, being from a younger son, without fortune, she was considered justified in refusing. But the other

suitor was a man of wealth and family, a connexion, indeed, of the St. Maurs, and his rejection occasioned considerable surprise to Lady Emily, and vexation to the Earl; and as, in addition to the above-named advantages, Miss Moubray's admirer was handsome and agreeable, they concurred in thinking his failure could only have arisen from the circumstance of her affections being pre-engaged; and by whom? Lady Emily said, Mr. Wickham; Lord St. Maur thought, Captain Armstrong.

Cecil regretted the close of the London season, not so much on account of its gaieties, but because amidst the bustle and activity of London life she saw much less of her guardian than in the comparative quietude of Selwood; and she looked forward to returning thither with extreme dissatisfaction; for, as might be expected, the admiration excited by our heroine, during her stay in the metropolis, by fostering notions of her own importance, was little calculated to increase her docility, or induce her to bear with

patience the annoyances of her situation. Indeed, the repugnance with which she had originally seen herself consigned to Lord St. Maur's charge, had, from his injudicious conduct, become all but positive aversion.

But while Cecil's prejudices against her guardian gained strength, *his* were slowly giving way; the fancied resemblance to his wife was forgotten; and his feelings towards her gradually became softened; indeed, there were moments when he experienced something like pride in the beautiful girl who held his arm; for Lord St. Maur, be it known to our readers, in the excess of his vigilance, was apt to offer this species of civility much more frequently than Cecil considered either necessary or desirable; and many were the pleasant little tête-à-têtes with Elizabeth Hartfield which were thus interrupted, to the great dissatisfaction of both young ladies, especially of the object of his attention, who thought it very strange, that as her guardian seldom danced, he should like coming to such parties at all, and

still more extraordinary, that when he *did* come, he could find no better amusement for himself than watching her; but, however reluctant, she dared not refuse the proffered politeness; and while parading through the crowded rooms, Cecil's fingers barely resting on his arm, her pretty little head thrown back, and a slight shadow of saucy discontent playing about her mouth, and he, stealing occasionally a glance at her, then looking anxiously and uneasily around,—they were the very picture of a jealous husband and a pouting wife.

Cecil had no inclination to return to Selwood; nevertheless, towards the end of July, she found herself seated in the barouche, on the high road to ——— shire, and trying hard to overcome a powerful propensity to drowsiness, occasioned by a lengthened exposure to Lady Emily's society.

CHAPTER IX.

"Papa," cried Mary, as the Earl sauntered into the drawing room, one cold, damp afternoon, shortly after their return to Selwood, "Cecil has got such a dreadful cold, and her face is all red, and swelled like mine when I had the mumps last winter. You can't think how bad it is."

"Yes, indeed," said Lady Emily, "Cecil has a severe cold; it's so unfortunate, for this is Wednesday."

"I'm really concerned to hear it," replied St. Maur. "But what has the day of the week to do with Miss Moubray's indisposition?"

"Oh dear, St. Maur, don't you recollect this is the day we are to dine with Mrs. Henrietta Beauclerc, and Cecil thinks she will not be able to go."

"If that be the only consequence of Cecil's cold, she would, I should imagine, be willing to compound with it; at least, if she is of my opinion she would think it no hardship to be so detained. I'm sure, I would gladly put up with a swelled face to escape one of Mrs. Henrietta's dinners."

"Yes, I know very well how tiresome you are about going there; but is it not most unfortunate Cecil's cold should have come on this very day? She seemed very well last night. I declare it's extremely provoking; it's always the way, people are sure to have something the matter with them when one wants them to be well. I dare say, after all, it's more than half fancy; girls are so full of whims."

"Emily," replied the Earl, rather gravely, "you are mistaken in saying Miss Moubray was quite

well last night; she had evidently a very heavy cold; and I was by no means surprised to hear of her being too unwell to come down to breakfast this morning. But where is she now; not confined to her bed, I hope?"

"Oh dear, Cecil is not ill enough for that, she will not even see Mr. Drenchum; but I recommended her to lie down for an hour or two, hoping she will be better and able to go to Firgrove; and Anna, who has just been up to see how she is, says she is a little easier, so that if the swelling in her face would but go down,—and that, I suspect, is the real difficulty,—she may be able to manage it after all."

"Indeed, Emily, I think it would be highly imprudent, and I trust that whether Miss Moubray recovers her good looks or not, she will not attempt to leave home this miserable damp afternoon."

A few months ago Lady Emily would not have dreamt of maintaining her wishes in opposition to her brother's opinion; but since the

memorable conversation in which she first departed from the rule which she had laid down to herself, her constant habit of deference to him had become considerably weaker; she therefore persisted. "But what are we to do? If Cecil stays at home there will be an odd number at the table, and you know that is the thing of all others Mrs. Beauclerc objects to. She considers it unlucky, and I would not offend her for the whole world; she is seventy-seven years old this very day, and I have learnt from good authority, she has at least thirty thousand pounds in her own power; indeed, she said as much the last time I was at Firgrove."

"Well," replied the Earl, "I can only repeat my remark that Miss Moubray ought not to go out this evening. And really, Emily, as she has no prospect of a legacy from our old friend, it is very hard she should be subjected to an increase of her indisposition."

"But I don't think it would make Cecil worse

if she were to wrap herself up well; besides, we could keep up both the carriage windows. I've a great mind to speak to her myself; I'm sure she might go if she liked it."

"You forget, Emily, that keeping the carriage windows closed will not warm Mrs. Beauclerc's rooms; and I'm very much mistaken if you find anything half so comfortable as this ——," stirring the fire as he spoke.

"Well, but St. Maur, what shall we do? Will you come?"

Lord St. Maur shook his head. "You know I'm not invited."

"Because you told Mrs. Beauclerc you were engaged. But you must be aware she would be delighted to see you. Will you come?"

"No, no, Emily; I have foresworn Mrs. Beauclerc's dinners; I was half poisoned the last time I dined there."

"Well, I'm sure it's very unfortunate, but

she has got a new housekeeper, and I dare say the dinner will be better managed; do come."

"I've got a cold, too," said the Earl, clearing his throat.

"How can you be so ridiculous, St. Maur; I'm sure you're quite well. However, I shall go and speak to Cecil, I dare say she'll make an effort to oblige me."

"Why can't you take Anna?"

"Anna? You forget she is not out yet, and goes nowhere."

"Then the compliment of her dining at Firgrove will be greater, and perhaps she will come in for a double share of the thirty thousand pounds."

"Do you really think so?—I mean, that Mrs. Henrietta would take it as a compliment?" Lady Emily mused for a minute or two. "I declare it is not unlikely. I shouldn't be surprised if the old lady were to be very much pleased; but then what can be done for a dress?"

"Oh, mamma," cried Anna, whose heart fluttered even at the prospect of a dinner party at Firgrove, "there is my pink silk, or white gauze, which I've only worn twice, either would do; and if Cecil should increase her cold and be unable to go to the review, you know how disappointed she will be."

The difficulties of Anna's toilette were soon overcome, and Cecil suffered to remain in peace; as, however, she was not aware of the active part Lord St. Maur had taken in effecting her release, she determined to treat her ailment secundum artem;—that is to say, to have tea with Mary instead of dining with her guardian, and to leave the drawing-room long before the hour at which he usually entered it. By this arrangement she hoped entirely to escape a tête-à-tête; but the spirit of contradiction seemed to have fastened on the Earl, for, despatching his solitary meal with unusual celerity, he made his appearance in the sitting-room at least three quarters of an hour earlier than he was wont

to do, and there he found the invalid in her morning dress, with a blue silk handkerchief tied over her head, and looking flushed and heated, though not to the extent described by Mary.

Cecil was not particularly pleased at finding her intentions thus completely frustrated; but there was no help for it, so she submitted with the best grace she could to the interruption; and indeed this was not difficult, for Lord St. Maur, not suspecting the true reason of his ward's non-appearance at the dinner table, inquired so kindly as to the state and progress of her indisposition, that it was impossible not to feel obliged. He held in his hand a copy of ———'s "last new poem," which had arrived by that evening's mail; and after partially cutting the leaves, proposed reading aloud some of the most striking portions. Of course the offer was accepted, and Lord St. Maur (who had already seen the work) commenced, while Cecil took up her net-

ting, but ere she had finished half a row, laid it on the table.

The poetry scarcely rose above mediocrity; yet there were some fine passages, and as the Earl's voice was low, and clear, and his emphasis correct, full justice was done to every beauty. Cecil listened with deep attention, her elbow resting on the arm of the sofa, her small fair hand shading her fairer brow; and as her eyes occasionally fell on her companion's most expressive countenance, for the first time she felt inclined to allow that Caroline's judgment had been just.

Then they criticised the work; but their opinions did not agree. How should a girl of nineteen and a man of thirty think alike? The author had taken for his subject that most favourite topic of the day, woman's fond, faithful, unrequited love. Cecil, in all the pride of early womanhood, laughed at the very idea; she allowed, indeed, that by a long course of

deep, devoted affection, a woman might be taught to return the sentiment she had inspired; but it was utterly impossible she could love first, or even last; in short, Cecil believed that love in the female breast is but the reflection of another's passion. Lord St. Maur, although not altogether acquiescing, was pleased to hear Miss Moubray speak thus lightly of feelings by which she had been supposed to be so strongly influenced. Nay more; she treated the subject altogether in so careless and frank a manner, that not only did he acquit her of any connivance in Armstrong's improper conduct with regard to her uncle, but he was even inclined to question whether the whole business had not been a figment of the General's imagination.

There was in the work in question a description of female beauty which Cecil thought resembled Mary. Her guardian laughingly disclaimed his daughter's pretensions to so much loveliness; but our heroine stood her ground, and the Earl listened with infinite complacency

to her praises of his little girl. Perhaps if she had reflected before she spoke, she would have been less eloquent in her panegyric on Mary's eyes and forehead.

But speaking does not suit colds; and Lord St. Maur, remarking her increased hoarseness, was about to return to the poem, when Cecil pointed to the chess-table, and asked if he would beat her. It was a game of which he was particularly fond, but never until now had she been his antagonist; for the formal, uncomfortable terms on which they had hitherto lived, entirely precluded a challenge from either party.

The Earl played well, far better than his ward, and yet the victory was hers. Probably the interest he felt for her indisposition drew away his thoughts from the game; at all events, it is certain that the anxiety displayed to preserve her from draughts, to place the screen in the most advantageous position, and to maintain a proper temperature in the room, was quite at variance with the solemn, silent attention so es-

sential to chess. To say the truth, Cecil would have been better pleased if Lord St. Maur had remained quiet, and attended to his game; for she was very much fidgetted by all these endeavours to promote her comfort; still, it was impossible to quarrel with the motive of so much assiduity, however disagreeable she might find the effect.

The Earl bore his defeat with perfect good humour; the conversation recommenced, and proved so interesting, that it was not until the sound of the carriage wheels announced the return of the Firgrove party, that Cecil recollected how essential are early hours to the recovery of a cold. She retired to rest that night, thinking that if a continuance of her indisposition would but ensure that of her guardian's present mood, she would almost be willing to bear with the inconvenience.

Lady Emily came in, redolent with camphor, and armed with an infallible remedy for swollen faces, and a particular request from Mrs. Hen-

rietta that the Earl would keep himself disengaged for the fifteenth of the ensuing month, as on that day the benevolent old spinster meditated another dinner party, principally with the kind intention of indemnifying Miss Moubray for her recent disappointment. Her ladyship was in high spirits. Mrs. Beauclerc had been much gratified by Anna's company, and very particular attention had been paid to Louisa during, and after dinner, by Mr. Coxe Fellowes, a gentleman possessing considerable property in the adjoining county.

The following day, Mrs. Henrietta's dark green chariot, heavy black horses, and fat postilion, were seen slowly traversing the park, and shortly after the venerable owner of Firgrove was ushered into the drawing-room, and received by the lady of the mansion with more than her usual suavity of manner.

The visit had a threefold object; to inquire after the success of her specific, to offer a seat in the above-mentioned chariot for the review,

and to nail down her refractory kinsman for the dinner party on the fifteenth. The two first points were easily settled. Cecil was much better; and Anna, Lady Emily assured her relative, would be delighted to avail herself of the vacant seat. But on the last and most important, Mrs. Beauclerc failed of ascertaining her success; for, notwithstanding many inquiries and messages, the Earl was not forthcoming; so that, after an almost interminable visit, the old lady was compelled to take leave, contenting herself with placing in Lady Emily's hand a large card of invitation for his lordship; and receiving her assurance, that if her brother were engaged for the fifteenth, immediate intimation should be sent to Firgrove, in order that another day might be fixed upon.

No sooner, however, was Mrs. Henrietta fairly reinstated in her carriage, and the horses' heads turned homewards, than Lord St. Maur, looking very like a culprit, entered the sitting-room.

"Well, now," cried his sister; "this is the

oddest thing I ever knew, and very tiresome too. Poor dear Mrs. Beauclerc has been here for the last two hours, waiting on purpose to see you; and though I sent everywhere to look for you, it was all in vain; and now, scarcely has she been gone five minutes, when you come into the room; I declare, it's the strangest thing; where can you have been? Didn't Coleman tell you? I'm sure I sent him at least three times, but he's growing very idle and inattentive, and I dare say never took the trouble of going further than the library."

"What made Mrs. Beauclerc so very anxious to see me?"

"To settle about the dinner, to be sure; she wants particularly to know whether you can go on the fifteenth before she sends out her invitations; and I have promised to send her word."

"Distant relations are dreadful bores," said the Earl, as he possessed himself of the card of invitation. "I really wish Mrs. Henrietta would

be satisfied with a morning visit, instead of pestering one to death with her infernal dinner-parties; and then she has fixed on so distant a day that, without offending the old lady, it would be impossible to escape. But I don't think I shall go, whether she is pleased or not."

Cecil reddened a little, for she thought the former part of this speech not quite civil in her presence.

"Mamma," said Louisa, "only think how lucky it is that Lord Newrystown should have been taken ill."

"Really, Louisa," observed her uncle, with whom Miss Warham was no favourite, "that is a very extraordinary manner of speaking; not the most feeling either. Why should you rejoice in the suffering of another?"

"Indeed," replied Louisa, "I don't mean to say that I'm glad Lord Newrystown is ill; but, as he *was* to have a fit of the jaundice, it certainly is fortunate it should happen now; for if Lady

Newrystown had come to Firgrove on Saturday, as she intended, there would have been no seat in Mrs. Beauclerc's carriage."

"But there are seats in mine?"

"Yes; but then Anna or I must have sat with our back to the horses; it is not half so pleasant as a chariot."

"I did not know that Lady Newrystown was even expected," observed Lord St. Maur.

"Nor I," replied Lady Emily, "until last night; it was, I believe, quite a sudden idea. William Beauclerc is coming for a short time to Firgrove, and Eleanor meant to have accompanied him; but Mrs. Beauclerc has had a letter by to-day's post, to say that Lord Newrystown is too unwell to be left, so the visit is deferred."

"Only deferred?"

"Only deferred. Mrs. Beauclerc says she thinks Eleanor will still be able to pass a few days with her, and, as Lord Newrystown's jaundice will probably be over by the fifteenth,

means to beg her niece to be with her for that day; so I really hope, St. Maur, you will not disappoint our kind old friend."

"Pray, Miss Moubray," said the Earl, carelessly approaching the table where his ward was seated, and taking up one of her drawing pencils, "have you ever seen my cousin, Eleanor Newrystown?"

Cecil had not.

"Then you will, I think, be pleased with her."

Our heroine did not feel certain on that point; but she made a few remarks in compliment of this lady's personal attractions, of which she had heard much.

"Yes," he replied, "Eleanor is handsome; but her principal charm consists less in her beauty than in her talents. I do not mean to say that she is accomplished, for in these days everybody sings, and plays, and dances well; but it is her mind, her intellect, which distinguish Lady Newrystown. She is one of the few persons with whom conversation is really a medium

of communication for the ideas and feelings, instead of being a mere string of unmeaning sentences, or foolish remarks." And he glanced, perhaps unintentionally, towards his sister, who, without giving Cecil time to reply, exclaimed,—

"You are quite right, St. Maur; Eleanor *is* a most superior person—one of my greatest favourites; I declare I don't think there is any one whose conversation I like so much; I am always delighted to see her; and there is nothing she likes so much as coming here; we agree so well." (Lady Emily was ever eloquent in Eleanor's praise, and anxious to encourage her brother's penchant for his cousin; for she considered a platonic affection for a married woman one of the best possible preventives for matrimony, and perhaps she was not altogether mistaken.) "But don't you think it rather odd in Beauclerc coming to stay at Firgrove? I assure you, *I* think it very strange indeed."

"What is there strange in Beauclerc's paying a visit to a near relation? Besides, you know, he

was unlucky at Ascot, and perhaps considers that Mrs. Beauclerc's thirty thousand pounds, or part of it, at least, would be well employed in clearing his difficulties."

"Gracious!" cried Lady Emily, "I dare say that *is* the cause of his visit. How very shocking; really the poor old lady ought to be put on her guard; don't you think somebody should warn her, St. Maur?"

"I hope *you* will not, at any rate, Emily."

"Mamma," said Anna, who had been carrying on a species of sotto voce argument with her sister, "how old do you suppose Lord Newrystown is? Louisa says he will soon be dying from old age; but I don't think he can be old enough for that."

"Old age, my dear Lou.; what can you be thinking of?"

"Why, you know, mamma, poor old man, he is always complaining. Lady Newrystown wrote word last spring he could not leave home on

account of his increasing infirmities: how old do you say he is?

"Indeed," replied Lady Emily, "I'm sure I don't know exactly how old to say; not above fifty-five though, I should think."

"Let us look in the Peerage, "said Anna."

"La, mamma," cried her sister, "Lord Newrystown not more that fifty-five? He looks sixty at the very least; I'm sure he can't be less."

"Let me see," continued her ladyship, counting on her fingers; "forty-five, fifty; I declare I haven't an idea; but I'm certain he's not nearly old enough to die. St. Maur, do you know what age Newrystown is?"

St. Maur was busy drawing on the back of Mrs. Henrietta's card of invitation, and appeared not to hear his sister.

"St. Maur, do tell me; how odd it is you won't speak; what can you be doing with that card? Horace, do say; I'm sure you must know. It is only ten years since they were

married, and he was'nt an old man then. Horace, how old is Lord Newrystown? Pray tell us."

"Within a year or two of Mrs. Henrietta, probably," said Horace, roused at length by his sister's reiterated appeals.

"What!" exclaimed Lady Emily, "between seventy and eighty! Oh, St. Maur; how ridiculous you are; I'm sure it isn't so. My dear Anna, do look in the Peerage, among the Irish Barons; you know, Lord Newrystown is not an English peer."

"Miss Moubray," said the Earl, rising, and placing the result of his industry before Cecil, "this is a correct likeness of our Firgrove neighbour, in her evening attire."

"Is it not rather a caricature?" said Cecil, smiling.

"By no means. I consider it a most faithful representation; a little embellished, perhaps, as you will be obliged to acknowledge when we have the pleasure of dining with her."

"Then," cried Lady Emily, "you will go?"

"I suppose I must."

"How glad I am." And, in the contemplation of the pleasure she knew the announcement would occasion Mrs. Henrietta, Lady Emily forgot her fears of Lord Newrystown's death, and Mr. Beauclerc's influence.

"Have you any commands for Elton?" inquired the Earl.

"Elton? oh, I remember; you are to meet the Duke of ——; no, I have nothing to say; when shall we see you again?"

"After the review; you know the Duke returns with me, and so will Piercefield."

"Have you a frank to spare for to-day?" asked Cecil.

"Yes, I have one, and only one. Do you want it?"

"I should, indeed, feel much obliged; but," added she, (seeing he was preparing to fold the paper,) "I am afraid my letter will not bear an envelop. Indeed, I hardly know whether it is not overweight already; but I will fetch it."

And Cecil left the room in search of the first letter, whose freedom from duty she had asked from her guardian.

"I hear," remarked Louisa, "that there is to be a very large party at Elton."

"Ah," said Lady Emily, "I dare say it will be very pleasant; all the best men in the county; besides the Duke, and many others. What a pity it is *we* cannot go. It's so tiresome that Lord Piercefield is not married, or at least that one of his sisters does not live with him. I often wonder why he has never married. I assure you, I think he is very much to blame; such a beautiful place, and forty thousand a year."

"Had you not better petition for a law enjoining matrimony on all bachelors and widowers possessing fine places and good fortunes?"

"St. Maur, how fond you are of joking; you know very well it would be of no use; besides," added her ladyship, gravely, "I don't approve of second marriages."

"That's a great pity, Emily; for as you say,

truly enough, I'm afraid we have too many widowers in the upper house, and bachelors in the lower, to give your petition a chance ; so that some other means must be found to convince Lord Piercefield of his offences. Now I've been thinking that the best way of opening his eyes would be to impress upon his mind what an admirable addition to his happiness a wife would be. Now don't you think you could take him in hand? I really would advise you to try; there is no fear of non-success ; female eloquence is, you know, proverbial; and when he is convinced, you can recommend one of your daughters, or even yourself, which would be better still."

"Indeed, St. Maur, I shall do no such thing."

"Well, well, you had better think it over; but how came you, Louisa, to know so much about the Elton gaieties? I understood we were not to be a large party. Who told you we were?"

"Mr. Coxe Fellowes," answered Miss Warham, looking rather conscious.

"Is he invited?"

"I believe so."

"And I suppose there will be no objection to my asking him over here?"

"Oh dear, no; to be sure not," exclaimed Lady Emily.

"Well, then, there will be three most eligible men; so I hope you will make the best of the opportunity, and appear in your most becoming looks and dresses."

"Three eligible men! Who do you mean, St. Maur? I am sure I know but of one, Mr. Coxe Fellowes. Pray who are the others?"

"Who? Why I have told you. Piercefield for you, Emily; Coxe Fellowes for Louisa; and the Duke for my little Anna here."

"St. Maur," said Lady Emily, with some degree of gravity, for she did not quite like the omission of Cecil's name in this matrimonial scheme; "Anna is not yet eighteen, and of

course never thinks of marrying; I must beg you will not put such nonsensical ideas into her head."

"Well, Anna, as that is the case, you must, for the present, rest satisfied with your success at Firgrove; and Cecil shall be Duchess of ——."

"Oh!" said the young lady not eighteen, "that will never do; I am sure Cecil would not have him."

"Are you, Anna? Perhaps when the Duke asks Cecil, you will find you are mistaken."

"No, indeed, uncle; Cecil says she would not marry a widower on any account; and, you know, he has been married."

"Humph," said the Earl, "that is surely a very silly determination."

"I can't agree with you, St. Maur," remarked his sister; "I think Cecil proves her sense in saying so; you know it has always been my opinion."

"And advice, too, I don't doubt. But,

Anna, as you seem so much in Miss Moubray's confidence, perhaps you can tell why she refused Colonel St. Maur; for he had not been guilty of a previous marriage?"

"Indeed, uncle, I know nothing about it, excepting what Cecil said to mamma."

"And what did Cecil say to mamma?"

"Nothing; but that as she will be rich, and need not marry for an establishment, she would not accept any man unless she liked him better than everybody else."

At this moment Miss Moubray returned, bearing the letter, which Lord St. Maur immediately commenced franking.

"It is for that person," said she, in answer to his inquiring look; "that poor artist, who took my likeness,—Miss Stout." And Cecil coloured slightly as she pronounced her protégées vulgar patronymic.

"Have you been giving her instructions on painting?" inquired he, raising the somewhat

weighty packet, as if to ascertain its specific gravity.

"No, indeed; I have merely endeavoured to persuade her to quit a profession which holds not out the slightest prospect of success."

"And do you imagine she will listen to you?"

"I fear not; we are all so backward in receiving an unpleasant truth."

"And conceit and ignorance are generally yokefellows; not, however, that I would apply that observation in its full force to the person in question; for indeed she seemed too timid and nervous to have even an opinion of her own, poor creature!"

There was so deep a tone of feeling in Lord St. Maur's manner as he pronounced the concluding part of his sentence, that Cecil wondered he did not render his pity more beneficial to its object; she little suspected that by the same post which bore her letter and remittance, (for there was more than advice in that weighty

packet,) the unfortunate artist received a blank enclosure containing a fifty pound bank note.

"Anna, my dear," said Lady Emily, in the course of that evening; "are you quite certain that Miss Moubray *has* this decided objection to widowers?"

"Yes, mamma, *quite;* Louisa knows it too."

"I'm heartily glad of it; Cecil is a very sensible, well-disposed girl," remarked her ladyship, joyfully dismissing from her mind a sort of vague, uncomfortable apprehension, which had sprung up there within the last four-and-twenty hours.

CHAPTER X.

THERE is, perhaps, nothing more erroneous than the opinion we shortsighted mortals are led to form of our fellow creatures. The judgment, always feeble, is rarely uninfluenced by feeling, or free from prejudice; and ignorant as we generally are of the real motives by which others are actuated, how apt are we to impute to them sentiments and notions, faults or virtues, to which they have not the slightest claim.

General Moubray described Lady Emily Warham as an uncommonly elegant woman. Elizabeth Hartfield said she was fine; and poor

Lady Emily was neither one nor the other. On his first visit to Selwood Castle, the veteran stayed one day only, the greatest part of which was spent in Lord St. Maur's study; and when, after a long and tedious conversation, full of dry details of business, he emerged from thence—Lady Emily, well dressed and still handsome, presiding with grace over her brother's well-appointed table, or languidly seated in a saloon, where everything betokened wealth and elegance, appeared to singular advantage in the eyes of one not much versed in female society; especially as, little guessing the real purport of General Moubray's visit, and thinking it most probable there were nephews in the back ground, her ladyship treated him with infinitely more cordiality than generally falls to the lot of crabbed old bachelors.

Lady Emily *looked* like an elegant woman, and could she but have remained silent might have passed for one; but, unhappily, like the generality of silly people, she was fond of talk-

ing, and her conversation, by betraying her deficiency of mind, destroyed the impression which her appearance had created. No really silly person can long sustain a character for superiority of manner; for no silly person possesses moral dignity, without which it is absurd to talk of distinction in any way; *au reste*, ignorance, whether it arise from want of education in the plebeian, or paucity of intellect in the well-born, is still ignorance, and the twin-sister of vulgarity; consequently, Lady Emily, though seldom offending against the conventional rules of society, had no claim to superior elegance. Neither did she merit the imputation of finery; she had, it is quite true, endeavoured to narrow rather than extend the circle of her acquaintance, but not from any feeling of exclusiveness.

The late Earl had strenuously opposed his daughter's marriage, and the sequel proved how just had been his estimate of his future son-in-law. Colonel Warham, a man of slender fortune, and belonging to a family merely respect-

able as to birth, was extravagant and dissipated; and within a few years of the union contrived to spend the ten thousand pounds he had received with his lady, and to bring to the hammer nearly the whole of an estate which had been left him by a distant relation; and but for the interposition of his brother, would soon have found himself a denizen of the King's Bench. In consequence, however, of the Baronet's kind exertions, and various supplicatory letters from his daughter, Lord St. Maur obtained from government a sinecure of fifteen hundred pounds per annum, to which five hundred a year was added by Sir Thomas.

On such an income some people would have contrived to live in comfort, but Warham was a gambler, and his wife a bad economist; so that, when an attack of fever terminated his existence, his affairs were found in the greatest disorder; and the sale of his remaining property did little more than satisfy his creditors.

Sir Thomas, though far from being in affluent

circumstances, did not withdraw the annuity he had formerly tendered, and which was trebled by the present Earl on taking possession of his estates. Lady Emily was thus placed above want, but not beyond the reach of anxiety. Colonel Warham's offences had not been limited to extravagance; as, however, his lady's discernment was not of the brightest, she attributed all her annoyances to their want of means, and was quite convinced, that if they had but possessed a place in the country, a convenient house in town, and eight or ten thousand per annum, her husband would have proved as polite, obliging, and domestic, as any other husband. Poor Lady Emily was wrong. Wealth will do much in promoting comfort, or increasing happiness; but the conversion of a profligate into a moral man is beyond even the mighty power of gold.

Her ladyship's opinion, however, ill-founded as it was, was adhered to with all that tenacity for which weak minds are proverbial; and having, as she imagined, suffered so much from straitened

circumstances, to prevent a recurrence of the evil became henceforth the *prima mobile* of her existence. She had, it is true, fifteen hundred a year; still, it was only income, and the Warham estate being strictly entailed, five hundred must cease with her brother-in-law's life; and full of this conviction, Lady Emily, being a great alarmist, watched the deepening hues of the Baronet's complexion with considerable interest: for she knew that people with purple faces are liable to apoplexy.

But the state of Sir Thomas's health was a point of minor importance to the expediency of continuing the head of Lord St. Maur's establishment; and it was her anxiety on this subject which had gained for her the reputation of finery. The Earl, caring but little for general society, left to his sister the choice of visiters at the Castle; and very few indeed were the invitations issued by that prudent lady, at least to persons of her own sex. Elderly and middle-aged, being generally provided with disposable daughters and

grand daughters, were rejected; while young fared no better, since they might have sisters or first cousins.

But this line of policy, prudent as it might be as regarded her brother, was not without its inconveniences. Lady Emily's conduct had given offence; and when Louisa attained her eighteenth year, and her mother became anxious to renew former intimacies, or to make fresh acquaintances, her overtures were received with coldness; people would not be taken up and put down just as lady Emily pleased; consequently Miss Warham's first spring in London was neither profitable nor pleasant; and Lady Emily thought it very hard, that while St. Maur, who hated balls and parties, might go anywhere he chose, she and poor Louisa were obliged to content themselves with concerts, the opera, and one subscription to Almack's.

The next year, however, was an improvement; Lord St. Maur escorted his ward on some occasions when he apprehended Arm-

strong's presence, and from that time his sister's acquaintance and invitations increased to an astonishing degree. That lady was delighted with the change, which she attributed to her having during the preceding autumn and winter augmented the number of guests at Selwood Castle, and she determined upon repeating the experiment upon a still larger scale.

The day appointed for the inspection of the ——shire yeomanry, of which Lord St. Maur was colonel, was bright and lovely, as review and race days seldom are; and great was the bustle and animation pervading the little town of —— and its surrounding neighbourhood. But among all the happy hearts and smiling faces, there was, perhaps, not one more joyous than Mary St. Maur, who, on the occasion of Anna's transfer to Mrs. Henrietta's green chariot, was to benefit by the vacant seat in Lady Emily's landau; and there she was, long, long before the hour at which they were to leave Selwood, in her white muslin frock, pink capote, and fichu,

the exact colour of the roses in Cecil's white crape bonnet; her cheeks glowing, her eyes sparkling, the very image of happiness. But poor Mary's delightful expectations were destined to receive a check.

There was a road through the Selwood domain which materially shortened the distance between Firgrove and the scene of the review; it had consequently been arranged that Mrs. Beauclerc should call for Anna. Servants and their employers, however, do not always agree in their tastes; and on this eventful morning, Mrs. Henrietta's somewhat antiquated postilion, feeling rather rheumatic and very lazy, determined that it would be better for his mistress and himself to remain quietly at home; the result of this resolution was a note, informing Lady Emily that owing to the sudden seizure of one of her carriage horses, poor Mrs. Beauclerc would be unable to fulfil her engagement.

As, with the usual selfishness of the class to which he belonged, the knight of the saddle had

not notified this untoward circumstance until the moment at which the carriage ought to have been ready, it was impossible to make any other arrangement; and his mistress was obliged to remain a prisoner. But the disappointment did not end with her: what was now to become of Anna? The horse and carriage department at Selwood was certainly not limited to the elegant equipage which for the last half hour had been standing at the hall door; but there was only one chaperon. Even Sir Thomas, who had arrived the previous evening, had ridden slowly forward, or he might have been coaxed into the notion that a seat in a barouche, with Cecil and Anna for companions, would be pleasanter than a five miles ride under a broiling sun; but he was gone: one of the four young ladies must be content to resign her expected amusement, and the question was—*which?* Louisa wished to go; so did Anna; and so Cecil; but above all, Mary. There was a general silence, and many blank faces.

On what trifles do our destinies depend. Who would have imagined that Mrs. Beauclerc's old, ill-tempered postilion, could have plunged three pretty girls, one good-looking widow, and one blithe, merry-hearted child, into perplexity and disappointment. Lady Emily hesitated; but no time was to be lost, and Louisa proposed that Mary should remain. "But is that necessary?" inquired Cecil, perceiving poor Mary's evident mortification; "cannot we manage to take her? She is such a little creature: surely there will be room enough between us. She might even sit on my knee."

"Oh dear, no," replied Miss Warham; "it would be quite impossible: a fourth person in a carriage is one *de trop*, and five out of the question; besides, the Earl does not like her going into public,—he will never let her go to children's balls, or any thing of the kind. Pray, mamma, don't think of going five in the carriage."

"Indeed," said Lady Emily, "Louisa is quite right,—five will be too many,—and, Mary, you wont mind it; will you, love? Give me a kiss, like a good child; the very next time I drive to L—— I will take you with me."

Mary received the caress of her affectionate relative, and then returned to Cecil's side; she did not speak; but her heart was full, and the round drops hung heavily beneath her dark fringed eyelids. Why do we say that childhood is a happy time? Has infancy no share in human woe? Oh, yes; children, even those whose lot appears the brightest, are not without their little sorrows. The rebuke, the slight, the disappointment—these are theirs; yet childhood *is* a happy period, for it knows neither anxiety nor self-reproach; while in after life, fear for the future, sorrow for the past, corrode the passing joy, and give a sharper edge to present anguish.

Cecil had looked forward to the review with unusual pleasure; for, in addition to the attrac-

tions commonly presented to young ladies by such gaieties, to her the one in question offered that of novelty. But she was not selfish; and when it appeared necessary that some one must remain at home, she determined it should not be her dear, affectionate Mary. The matter was soon arranged. Lady Emily made a few civil remonstrances, and the object of her good-nature wavered for half a minute between leaving "poor Cecil by herself," and the delight of seeing her papa in his "beautiful regimentals." But what female heart was ever long proof against a laced jacket? Mary's, at any rate, was not: the carriage rolled away, and Cecil was alone in that vast mansion, when, after determining that Louisa certainly was the most disagreeable girl she had ever met with, and wondering how Lady Emily could care so little for her niece, she resolved to be very industrious, and began tuning her harp.

Neither Lady Emily nor her daughter gained by their want of good-nature and affection, for

Mr. Coxe Fellowes, either from caprice or prudence, was no longer particular in his devotedness to Miss Warham, and that lady was too much disappointed to derive any amusement from the gay scene. And Lord St. Maur, who had been rather exulting in the admiration Cecil's beauty could not fail of awakening on this her first public appearance in the county, was highly dissatisfied with the arrangement, which he considered not only ill-bred as regarded Miss Moubray, but even deficient in consideration for him,—for Cecil was *his* ward, *his* guest, *his* relation,—a want of proper attention to her was, therefore, in fact, a slight to him; and the idea, that on Mary's account she had given up an amusement to which he knew she had been looking forward with eagerness, while it increased the interest he was beginning to feel in his beautiful charge, added, in no small degree, to his angry irritation.

He reached home some time after his sister's return, and finding that the ladies had already

retired to prepare for dinner, hurried his toilette, hoping thus to secure a few minutes' conversation with Cecil previous to the general assembly of the numerous guests who were to dine that day at Selwood Castle; for he was anxious to express his sense of her kindness to his little girl, and his disapprobation of the morning arrangement. Lord St. Maur found the drawing-room untenanted, save by one individual, who was standing at the open window, apparently in admiration of the landscape; his attention, however, being attracted by the Earl's entrance, he turned round, and, to his utter astonishment, Lord St. Maur beheld Henry Armstrong!

At first, he could scarcely credit his senses, but so it was; Armstrong, the object of his jealous hatred, of his anxious fear—Armstrong, the partner of Frances's folly, if not of her guilt, the instigator of Cecil Moubray's ingratitude and base deceit—stood before him!

CHAPTER XI.

To Charles Mordaunt, Esq., Appleby House.

"No, my dear Mordaunt, admirable as I think your plan, I cannot further it; your pleasant party I may not join,—your gratifying invitation must be declined. And why, and wherefore? you will say. You shall hear. When we were in town last spring I believe you were partly aware that my "pretty little ward," as you were pleased to term her, was a subject of much anxiety to me, owing to her having, it was suspected, formed an attachment to a low fellow, to whom her uncle (naturally enough)

strongly objected. I believe, too, Mordaunt, that you, happy in your own freedom, were rather inclined to laugh at, than sympathize with me, and I must acknowledge there were moments when I was ready to agree with you in thinking my suspicions foolish and my fears chimerical; nay more, I will own that the general correctness of Miss Moubray's manners, her beauty so truly feminine, and, above all, her kindness to my child, (though not in its origin very flattering to me,) induced me to believe, not only that she was incapable of the conduct ascribed, but—pshaw—what matters it what I thought? Cecil Moubray has proved herself a woman,—a very woman,—in other words, a most accomplished hypocrite!

"We have had a review, to which my young lady was all anxiety to go; but there was some difficulty about a seat in the carriage, and under colour of not disappointing Mary, she remained at home. 'Kind, self-denying creature!'

you exclaim. Wait, until you hear the sequel, my dear friend. Miss Moubray's real object in resigning her place was neither more nor less than to secure an interview with her blackguard admirer; and not content with a tête-à-tête of I know not how many hours, she induced my sister, who has, you know, more heart than head, to give the fellow an invitation to dine and sleep here; and, in consequence, I enjoyed the gratification of having as a guest the man, who, but for my sudden withdrawal of Lady Selwood from his influence, would, in all probability, have been the means of my figuring away in Doctors' Commons; this too, notwithstanding my having given General Moubray an assurance, almost a promise, that his niece and her admirer should not meet under my roof.

"You, Mordaunt, who know something of my impetuous nature, will readily imagine how my blood boiled, and how heartily I longed to shew the rascal the way to the door; had he remained long, I think I must; but as he went early on the

following day I did contrive to control my indignation: I took, however, so little pains to conceal my dislike to his society that I think he will not repeat his visit; but the mischief, as far as regards my ward, is not at an end, for ere he took his leave another meeting was agreed upon, and Cheltenham is to be the place of rendezvous; of course, I shall interpose my veto, and it is principally on this account I am forced to decline your invitation. But, I think I hear you ask, 'Why not do both? What prevents your expressing your disapproval of the engagement, and forbidding your ward's leaving Selwood during your absence?' Simply because, let my back be once turned, Miss Moubray would pay about as much attention to my remonstrances, or wishes, as you would to those of your bay mare could she impart them to you; besides, her uncle has laid down a plan of proceeding with regard to his niece, from which, although contrary to my own judgment, I do not like to incur the responsibility of diverging; so, for the present,

things must take their course. I have written to the old gentleman, and think it not improbable that when he finds how utterly impossible it is to prevent the intercourse, he will make up his mind to consent to the marriage; or, at any rate, remove her from my charge; and truly rejoiced should I be if he would order her to join him. My dear fellow, do listen to a friend's advice and be careful you never place yourself in my unpleasant predicament—marry, hang, drown, shoot yourself, but do not take charge of another man's daughter or niece. It is impossible to express the vexations of a position such as mine; embracing all the responsibility, without the authority, of a father. Then, to be bearded by a mere girl—intolerable! There is something also in the coolness of Miss Moubray's conduct, at which, if it were not on an occasion of so much moment, I could almost smile. Only conceive her getting me to frank the letter which I have no doubt contained the arrangements for this creditable interview. It is

true she had the grace to blush a little, and I, deceived by her representations (for what will not a man believe when a pretty woman is the authority), must needs bestow *my charity* upon the emissary in this disgraceful business. Mordaunt, farewell: let me hear from you soon; and if you can pay us a visit in the course of the winter, you well know how much pleasure it will occasion

"Yours faithfully,

"St. Maur."

Like many of his profession, Henry Armstrong was amongst the number of those who "love and ride away." But on one occasion, some two years previous to this period of my tale, he had become seriously attached to the only child of a gentleman of good family, and fair fortune. As his father was then reputed to be immensely rich, no objection was raised by the young lady's parents, but Miss Wilmot not having attained her eighteenth year, the mar-

riage it was stipulated should not take place for some months; and in that interval Mr. Armstrong's failure occurring, the match was broken off, and Sophy ordered to forget her discarded lover. Such commands, however, are much more easily issued than obeyed; Henry's misfortunes had endeared him to his mistress, and when a short time before General Moubray's departure from England they met accidentally, the agitation of her manner plainly told how little change her feelings had undergone; and it was the certainty of still possessing her affections which induced Armstrong to disappoint his patron.

Mrs. Wilmot, at whose instigation, principally, the engagement had been put an end to, was dead; in a twelvemonth Sophy would be of age and entitled to fifteen thousand pounds; and she was sanguine that her father would be at length induced to yield to her wishes. Their plighted vows were renewed; but, for the present, the most entire secrecy was considered

necessary, and to avoid suspicion, Henry, after throwing up his appointment, returned to Paris.

I question whether he would so readily have relinquished his situation had Cecil accompanied her uncle; since at the very moment the fond, credulous Sophia was listening with eager delight to his assurances of unabated affection, her selfish admirer was as much or more in love with Miss Moubray than he had ever been with her. As our readers are perhaps aware, Lord St. Maur's suspicions of a preconcerted meeting were perfectly unfounded; Cecil, indeed, knew that Henry would be in England on some business of his father's towards the end of the summer, and she thought it probable that as Mr. Wilmot's property lay at no very great distance from Selwood Castle, Armstrong might perhaps pay her a visit; when he did come, she was glad to see him, but nothing further; the invitation to dine and sleep originated entirely with Lady Emily. Lord St. Maur's ungracious reception gave little umbrage to his obnoxious

guest, for Armstrong was one of those happy, self-sufficient beings, who never feel themselves unwelcome; while Cecil, anxious to palliate her guardian's rudeness, treated the handsome young soldier with more than her wonted cordiality.

In the course of the evening, however, Armstrong was struck by the Earl's pointed manner towards him; and observing that Miss Moubray was not without her share of Lord St. Maur's displeasure, it suddenly occurred to him that his attentions to her had given offence, and as suddenly did this modest gentleman conclude, that such would not have been the case had she not in some measure participated in his sentiments—he was perhaps even beloved by Cecil. The idea was too delightful, too flattering, to be resisted, and in the triumph of the moment, forgetting honour, gratitude, prudence, every thing, in fact, which ought to be remembered, he hazarded one of those speeches which mean a great deal, or nothing. The expression of surprised displeasure which followed, instantly

proved the fallacy of his hopes. Armstrong was deeply mortified by the failure, but being an expert tactician in the art of love-making, he maintained so perfect a command of his countenance, and continued the conversation with such apparent ease, and even gaiety, that Cecil imagined she must have given to his words an undue interpretation.

The following day he became, if possible, more animated; expressed his regret at being unable to prolong his delightful visit; assured Lady Emily that her commissions should be executed with the greatest exactness and forwarded by the first opportunity; reminded Cecil of her promise respecting Cheltenham; kissed Lady Mary, and seizing Lord St. Maur's hand, shook it with considerable warmth, assuring his lordship he should be delighted to meet him again.

"Insufferable puppy!" mentally ejaculated the indignant peer, drawing himself up, and looking as if *he* had no wish whatever for a

renewal of their acquaintance. "Dog in the manger," muttered Armstrong, as he bowed himself out of the room.

"That's really a very nice young man," observed Lady Emily. "One of the Armstrongs of D——, I suppose?"

"Armstrongs of D——!" quickly retorted her brother. "No, indeed. I fancy the Armstrongs of D—— would be little pleased with the connexion. He is the son of a bankrupt cotton-spinner!"

"Gracious!" cried Lady Emily; "is it possible? My dear Cecil, how *can* you be on these intimate terms with such a person?"

Cecil was far from being deficient in family pride (an inconvenient commodity, with which women are in general more liberally supplied than men,) nor had Armstrong risen in her estimation by his selfish conduct towards her uncle, and his late display of conceited forwardness; but, piqued by Lord St. Maur's incivility,

she resolved to uphold him, and therefore replied, with much coldness—

"I should not have imagined that in a country like ours it would have been considered a disgrace to belong to that portion of the community from whence springs so much of our national importance; indeed, I must acknowledge that I think the children of an honest, industrious manufacturer, will have greater reason to be proud of their ancestor than the descendants of persons whose wealth was, perhaps, acquired in a less reputable manner; I am sure, at least, there are some of my progenitors who reflect little honour on their posterity."

"Ah, Cecil," said Lady Emily, "these are your Whig notions."

"And," continued Miss Moubray, "although Captain Armstrong may not have the honour of belonging to the family you have mentioned, he is far from being ill connected: his mother was a daughter of the late Sir John Lichfield;

and even, were it not so, I should have no reason to decline his acquaintance, for Mrs. Armstrong, although many years older, was an intimate friend of my mother, and, I believe, not unacquainted with Lady Selwood. I am, also, under obligations to the family, and as the imagined inequality of station did not prevent my receiving favours from them, neither can it, nor shall it, cancel their remembrance. Still, I am really sorry I should have been the means of introducing so very unwelcome a guest; and I trust, Lady Emily, that in future you will not, from consideration to me, treat with civility any acquaintance of mine."

"Oh, my dear Cecil, you mistake me altogether. It was not, I assure you, from any feeling of ill-will towards Captain Armstrong that I spoke as I did; it was only because it is a disadvantage to a girl to have such persons about her. A young woman ought always to keep herself up, or she will find herself neglected. I remember a young friend of mine

lost more than one admirer because she would notice men of inferior rank. Depend upon it, girls cannot be too cautious in their acquaintances; but what you have said quite alters the case, for it is perfectly right in you to shew attention to your mother's friend; and if you have received kindness from the Armstrongs, it would be very wrong to forget it; for there is nothing so shocking as ingratitude; besides, as you say, they are not vulgar people. I knew a Mr. Lichfield once myself, a very gentleman-like man indeed, and, I dare say, a relation of Captain Armstrong's, whom I also like exceedingly, and shall be glad to see again when he is in our neighbourhood; and so, I am sure, will everybody!"

As the good-natured Lady Emily concluded, she cast a deprecating look at her brother; but though annoyed at having spoken so intemperately, Lord St. Maur was far too much disgusted with Henry, and incensed by Cecil's conduct, to offer even the shadow of an apology;

and Lord Piercefield coming in, the conversation ceased.

"Dog in the manger!" again repeated Armstrong, as he rode slowly from the Castle; "dog in the manger! surlily denying to another what your own churlish nature cannot value. And yet it is on you, and such as you, that fortune pours her gifts. Your position in society varies not; your wealth knows no decrease; your lands remain, for you derive them from your ancestors. And how by them acquired? By honest industry? By thrifty care? No, no; by rapine, violence, and even bloodshed: still, it is honourable, highly honourable, to be thus descended; and you are courted, flattered, loved; while *I* must be content to be despised and shunned; and if I dare to use the senses nature gave me, it is presumption—madness—folly. For I am nobody! And yet, methinks, my haughty lord, that I might still play you a slippery trick with your fair ward, in spite of that proud look she gave me." He spoke unadvisedly, or he would

have known all our nobility do not derive their wealth from such a source.

There was little love lost between Cecil's guardian and her quondam admirer; for if Lord St. Maur had not forgiven his conduct towards Frances, neither had Armstrong forgotten the stretch of marital authority whereby he had been deprived of several excellent dinners; to say nothing of the eclât of being considered one of Lady Selwood's favoured attendants. Notwithstanding, however, the masterly manner in which the gallant soldier effected his retreat, a review of his exploits during the last four and twenty hours afforded him no satifaction; and, fearful lest tidings of his assiduities towards Cecil might reach Miss Wilmot, he devoted the hour he was obliged to spend at the little town of L——, while waiting the arrival of the London coach, to penning a most lover-like epistle, in which he assured his dear and only beloved Sophia that she had not been a moment absent from his thoughts since their

cruel separation,—a separation, under which nothing could support him but the hope of a meeting when they should part no more.

The letter, being duly sealed and directed, was conveyed to London in his portmanteau, and from thence despatched via post to its place of destination, where it was received with ecstasy by the deluded girl.

And now, methinks, I hear my reader exclaim against the injustice of Cecil's suffering from the unprincipled conduct of another; unjust, perhaps, it may be, but not unusual in the present state of things, as every one who has conscience enough to pay his tradesmen's bills can testify; for it is a well-known fact, to cover the deficiencies of those who do not pay, a higher price is charged to those who do. Again, you are surprised that Lord St. Maur should be so easily misled; remember, I beseech you, that having, as it were on the very threshold of life, stumbled on two most unfortunate specimens of

womankind, he naturally conceived a very unfavourable opinion of the whole sex; and early impressions, especially when received through the medium of the feelings, are not easily got rid of. Prejudices may, indeed, be called the weeds of the human mind, which, impoverishing the soil, overrun the surface, choking the growth of what is good and useful, while they themselves take root so deeply that they can hardly be eradicated. There was a certain degree of resemblance, also, in their dispositions, which rendered the position in which Cecil and her guardian were placed mutually irksome, and led to perpetual jarring. Both were high-spirited and proud; he, unaccustomed to opposition; she, to restraint; and as neither would give way, it was next to impossible they could agree. Had he resembled Wickham, or she, Caroline Hartfield, entire harmony might have prevailed between them; but as it was, offended by the Earl's rudeness, and hurt by his want of friend-

liness, Cecil became less than ever disposed to submit to an authority, in her estimation both arbitrary and unreasonable, or to consult the wishes of one so utterly devoid of kindly feelings towards her.

CHAPTER XII.

During Mr. Coxe Fellowes's visit at Selwood, he paid Louisa just sufficient attention to admit of his being considered "hopeful;" and he was in consequence included in the number of guests who were to meet at Firgrove on the fifteenth, an arrangement which gave little satisfaction to Lord St. Maur, whose standard of female propriety being high, maintained, that in inviting the gentleman to the Castle quite sufficient encouragement had been given; besides, by making what might appear a dead set at the young man, the business was far more likely to be hindered than advanced.

But still greater was the peer's discomposure, on learning his sister's intention of remaining at home, in order that her youngest daughter might again favour Mrs. Henrietta with an impromptu appearance. "It was," he said, "perfectly ridiculous; and most assuredly he would not enter the drawing room, preceded by three girls; he might as well set up a boarding school for young ladies at once; either Anna or Louisa must therefore be content to stay at home."

Lady Emily was greatly disappointed in being thus obliged to relinquish a plan she imagined so desirable; but where lovers and legacies are in question, mamma's are seldom long at fault; so, after some deliberation, she hit upon a scheme, calculated, in her estimation, to remove all her brother's objections. Accordingly, the carriage being ordered a short time before the luncheon hour, the three rejected damsels made their appearance at Firgrove, where they were received by Mrs. Henrietta with more surprise than pleasure.

And when Lord St. Maur returned from a county meeting, to attend which he had left home immediately after breakfast, he found Lady Emily suffering dreadfully from migraine, and unable to raise her head from the pillow.

The manœuvre failed entirely; few people like being taken by surprise, and as Mrs. Beauclerc's establishment was not one in which a large dinner party could be given without causing some slight derangement of the usual family routine, the young ladies' arrival was particularly unpropitious; but if their presence was unpalatable to the owner of the mansion, far more obnoxious was the necessary accompaniment of Abigails to the all-important Mrs. Bright, who filled in her one person the twofold office of lady's maid and housekeeper. The consequence was, that after driving various pins into her hapless mistress, and placing her peruke and turban all awry, this considerate person, thinking far more of her dignity than her duty, repaired to the still-room, where, having garnished the board with the choicest

preserves, cakes, &c. &c., she commenced the honours of the tea table, leaving the dinner entirely at the mercy of an ignorant cook-maid. The result may be anticipated. When, after at least three quarters of an hour's delay, the repast did make its appearance, it fully vindicated Lord St. Maur's prudence in declining, as much as possible, the Firgrove hospitalities. And Mrs. Beauclerc, suspecting the cause of the mortifying failure, could not conceal her vexation, nor refrain from more than once expressing her astonishment that Lady Emily should not have waited until later in the day before she determined on remaining at home, and thus have given herself at least the chance of being able to come; "for sick head-aches," observed the old lady, "frequently go off as the day advances."

It must not be supposed that Lady Emily's stratagem had been productive of much enjoyment to her daughters, or their companion. Indeed, to Cecil, comparatively a stranger in

the county, and therefore uninterested in local news, or politics, the interval between luncheon and dinner would have appeared interminable but for Lady Newrystown's unremitting attention, who made every effort to soften Mrs. Beauclerc's somewhat ungracious reception of her unwilling guests. Miss Moubray's expectations concerning Eleanor had been considerably raised, and, as is generally the case in such instances, were not realized. Excepting very fine eyes, and a general air of fashion, she could discover no tokens of the beauty so highly celebrated; and although Lady Newrystown seemed desirous of bringing into play all her conversational powers, Cecil could not be amused. There was, in fact, too much of effort in everything said or done by this lady, to admit of her being really an agreeable companion. It required, also, little discrimination to perceive that she was always acting a part; since even while her deep emphasis of voice and manner indicated the greatest interest in the subject

under discussion, there was in those beautiful eyes an expression of vacancy, or indifference, which unequivocally betrayed the little sympathy existing between her words and feelings; her mind was evidently elsewhere.

Such was the impression produced on Cecil by the individual, who, in spite of her former treachery, was still (unless his words belied him) an object of interest to the fastidious St. Maur. Nor was the opinion erroneous. Lady Newrystown was an entirely artificial character; one, too, who took no pleasure in the society of her own sex; and although, on her brother's account, anxious to propitiate Miss Moubray, to whom William meditated paying his addresses, she derived no pleasure whatever from the conversation of a person whose disposition and manners were entirely the reverse of her own.

But the appearance of languid weariness observed by Cecil in the former part of the day, vanished with the morning dress. Lady

Newrystown, slightly rouged, attired with taste and elegance, wreathed with smiles, and sparkling with animation, became a totally different, but not (in Cecil's opinion, at least) an improved person. What, in the morning, had been labour in her manner, was now display; but all was still unnatural; this difference, however, there certainly was; in endeavouring to adapt her conversation to Miss Moubray's taste, Eleanor had done violence to her own, which was now completely gratified by finding herself the chief object of attraction to the only persons whose suffrages she really coveted,—to wit, the *gentlemen*; for Lady Newrystown dearly loved admiration; nor was she very scrupulous how she attained it; nor at whose cost she gratified her ruling passion, as Miss Warham this evening experienced; for Mr. Coxe Fellowes, already wavering, was so entirely fascinated by this practised coquette, that it became evident Louisa's chance of becoming mistress of Ripley Court was gone.

The ill-dressed dinner being at length over, the ladies adjourned to the drawing-room; and were in due time joined by the male part of the community. Music was asked for; the Misses Warham gave, with much effect, a duet from "La Cenerentola;" Cecil, a wild German air; and Lady Newrystown, the well known melody of "Auld Robin Gray;" and seldom has that beautiful ballad been more exquisitely sung. Eleanor's voice was not powerful, but melodious to the last degree, and her taste perfect. She was heard in silence, that best compliment to music; and as the last notes passed tremblingly away, a smothered sigh escaped from Lord St. Maur; bright crystal drops dimmed for a moment her dark, bewitching eyes, and then fell on the white tapering fingers, which shamed the ivory keys they lightly touched. Cecil no longer doubted her powers of captivating; but, in spite of a wish to avoid an uncharitable judgment, she could not but think, that if Lady Newrystown really felt the beauty of the lines

to which she had given so much expression, she would have stayed at home with her poor old sick husband, instead of spiriting away Louisa's admirer, and doing her utmost, as she evidently was, to regain her influence over her cousin.

The evening drew to a conclusion; the usual farewell civilities passed, and the guests separated; but no sooner were the Selwood party fairly seated in the carriage, than Lord St. Maur, vexed beyond measure at his sister's absurd management, in which he had all the credit of participating, gave vent to his irritation, by declaiming against the bad taste of three girls out of the same family making their appearance at a dinner party together; and Cecil, ignorant of the *vraie carte du pays*, feeling herself a stranger, and imagining that, as such, she must be considered the intruder, fancied the remark personal; and was about to assure the Earl (not, I am afraid, in the most gentle manner,) that it was the last time she would be guilty of so great a breach of good breeding, when she

was forestalled by an exceedingly flippant reply from Louisa; whose temper had been wrought to a high pitch of acerbity by Mr. Coxe Fellowes's desertion.

The young lady's impertinence drew from her uncle another invective respecting the impropriety and folly of any female's evincing an over-anxiety to attract, or an undue pleasure in receiving, the attentions of the other sex. "Independent of the indelicacy of such conduct," said he, "any woman who thus lowers herself might do very well as a plaything, to wile away an idle hour, but never could become the object of a serious attachment.

Now Louisa, though generally a decided flirt, on the present occasion had (thanks to Eleanor) been perfectly blameless; while Anna, who was really a quiet, well-disposed girl, had been handed to the dinner-table by the rector of the parish, an equally well-conducted individual; neither of the Misses Warham, therefore, having rendered themselves liable to the charge,

Cecil again, and most erroneously, concluded herself the object of the Earl's philippic; for Beauclerc had paid very assiduous court to her. She made no reply, for she was in truth so angry she dared not trust herself to speak; but her cheek flushed, and her beautiful lip curled indignantly at the bare supposition that *she*, the descendant of the line of Moubray, the future mistress of Eldersleigh, the courted, the admired, the followed, should be supposed capable of wishing to attract any man.

The rest of this agreeable drive passed in silence. The moment they reached Selwood the Misses Warham flew up stairs to acquaint their mamma with the ill-success of her operations. Cecil retired to her apartment; and Lord St. Maur, for the purpose, we presume, of recovering his digestive organs from the effects of their recent infliction, called for some soda water.

Beauclerc's attentions to Miss Moubray had not been unobserved by her vigilant guardian; who found in his cousin's designs a fresh cause

for anxiety; for neither his character nor fortune were such as to render him a suitable match; and although Cecil's attachment to Armstrong might ensure the failure of her new admirer, would not the *good-natured world* give him (Lord St. Maur) credit for the intention of sacrificing his ward's happiness to Beauclerc's interest.

"I wish I were well rid of that girl," he exclaimed, mentally, while proceeding to his bedchamber; "Not one moment's peace have I had since she came into the house; and Emily seems to have taken leave of the little sense she once possessed. Could anything be more farcical than her conduct to day, and that too, in spite of all I said this morning on the subject; but one might as well talk to the wind as to a woman; Emily used not to be so wayward; *silly*, she always was, but never wilful. What can have altered her so? As for Louisa's flippancy, it is perfectly unbearable; hang me, if I don't think

Miss Cecil must be at the bottom of it all; I saw her smile most provokingly when I came into the room. Yes," continued the irritated nobleman, rattling down the candlestick on his dressing-table, "it *is*, it *must* be, all her doing."

But indeed it was not: undoubtedly the addition of a fourth female to the family party was not very desirable, inasmuch as it unavoidably gave rise to occasional difficulties, the management of which required more skill and judgment than Lady Emily possessed; indirectly, therefore, Miss Moubray might be held guilty (in some measure at least) of that lady's misdemeanors; but the reason of the change which caused so much annoyance to Lord St. Maur, must be traced to his sister's maternal solicitude, and her entire subserviency to her eldest and favourite daughter, a selfish, disagreeable, unamiable person; as favourite children generally are. Every one acquainted with the economy of the poultry yard is well aware of the differ-

ence between a hen with a brood and a hen without a brood; and thus it was with Lady Emily Warham.

While her daughters were in the school-room, and she had in view but the one object of maintaining her position in her brother's establishment, no difference of opinion had arisen between them; because, in addition to her wish to keep him in good humour, there was, in fact, little to disagree about. But now that the Misses Warham were grown up, another, and a *paramount* anxiety, took possession of her mind; the consequence of which was, that, in many instances, Lady Emily actually thought it her duty to oppose him. There is an old French proverb, which says, "*Doux comme un mouton; têtu comme un frère de lait.*" Anglice, *donkey*. Why foster-brother and donkey shouldin this instance be synonymous I do not pretend to determine; but there is truth in the adage, and Lady Emily was precisely a case in point. Her temper remained unruffled; but when actuated by what

she considered her duty to her daughters, she rarely, or never, would yield her point; and, unfortunately, the instances in which she chose to assert her independence were generally those where it would have been far better to have followed her brother's advice.

There was also another circumstance which, though in itself trivial, added not a little to the Earl's petty vexations. His little girl, in the excess of her affection for Cecil, chose that her wardrobe should be the exact counterpart of Miss Moubray's; while Lady Emily, not being inclined to over-indulge her niece, saw no necessity for gratifying what she considered a foolish fancy. Mary was dissatisfied, and appealed to her father, who felt it incumbent on him to uphold his sister's authority; and the young lady did not always submit with becoming deference to the decision. It is quite true, these things were of little moment; but do not trifles make up the sum of life? And does not daily experience prove, that a series of petty annoy-

ances is infinitely more trying to the temper, and in some respects more difficult to bear, than even real misfortunes? Such, at any rate, was Lord St. Maur's opinion, and as it appeared that, somehow or other, Cecil Moubray was the cause of his vexation, it is not wonderful that, after a restless, unfreshing night, he rose, still wishing he were well rid of his troublesome charge.

Reader! I am sorry to dwell so long on what may appear to you unnecessary details; but I confess, that, notwithstanding his hot temper, Lord St. Maur is a favourite of mine. For, under an exterior, not always prepossessing, there was in him a deeply affectionate heart, much good and true feeling, with a noble, generous mind; and as his conduct towards Cecil does not place him in a very favourable point of view, I am anxious that every palliating circumstance should be placed before you.

While Lord St. Maur was drinking his soda water, Cecil (who, in common with most persons of her age, was fond of sitting up late), having dis-

missed her attendant, gave utterance to her indignation in the following letter to Mrs. Hartfield :

"PRAY can you tell me, my dear Carry, who first invented guardians? for I am really anxious to ascertain; not, however, that I may express my gratitude, for I am positively *pousseè à bout* with mine, and sometimes feel as though I could no longer bear the insolent dictation of this most disagreeable man. Formerly, I used to consider Lady Selwood in fault, but since I have had the happiness of becoming acquainted with her amiable husband, my opinion has, I assure you, entirely changed; and now, far from blaming my unhappy cousin, I am very much afraid, had I been in her place, I should have done as she did, with, however, this difference, that, instead of making my own exit, I should have plagued him to death, or, at least, have tried to do it. Yes, Carry, I know what you are saying, and I can guess (in part at least) the contents of your next letter. Lord St. Maur,

you will remind me, is my guardian, and as such I ought to obey, and try to please him, were it only from respect to my father's memory. But, my dear friend, the thing is impossible, utterly impossible; I don't mean respecting the obedience due from me to his lordship, for as I am not a little girl, who can be told to do this, or not to do that, we are never actually at issue; besides, where no positive command has been given, there can be no bonâ fide disobedience; but, as for studying the wishes of one who does and says everything he can to annoy and distress me; why, dearest Carry, were I mean-spirited enough to do so, I really believe the whole generation of Moubrays, not excepting my respectable namesake, who, in addition to the trifling offence for which he lost his head, was greatly addicted to what in these days would be called highway robbery, would rise from their tombs and renounce their degenerate descendant; or perhaps, like the ghost in the old ballad, 'Bear me away to my grave,' which, I assure you, Carry,

I should not like at all. I wonder whether my charming guardian would put on mourning for me? Perhaps you will say I don't deserve he should. But enough of this unpleasant subject. Let me turn to something more agreeable,—your dear mother's journey to Cheltenham. Oh, Carry, how could you for one instant doubt my readiness, my delight, to join her there. I only grieve,—— but no, I will not be so selfish as to regret even your absence, my dearest friend, since the cause from which it springs has so materially increased your happiness.

"Captain Armstrong has, I presume, informed you of his visit here. I was indeed rejoiced to learn there is every prospect of Mr. Wilmot sanctioning his engagement. Do you not think, such being the case, my uncle might be informed of the real motive which induced your brother to relinquish his appointment in so unexpected a manner? Such an explanation, I must confess, is, in my opinion, due to both parties. I endeavoured to prevail on your brother to write

to my uncle, and he promised to ask Miss Wilmot's permission to do so, though, he feared, without success. But I can hardly imagine Miss Wilmot would refuse her consent; at least, I think, were I in her situation, I would rather submit to any degree of personal inconvenience than suffer the slightest stigma to remain on the name soon to become mine.

"We have been dining out, and I have seldom spent a more disagreeable day. Lady Newrystown, of whom you have heard my mother speak, was one of the party. I do not admire her in the least, but I believe my taste (or rather want of taste) is singular. She sang "Robin Gray" *at* Lord St. Maur with considerable effect, besides perpetrating various other little coquettish manœuvres; in fact, it is quite clear she would have no objection to renew her engagement with her cousin, and as poor old Lord Newrystown is in a declining state of health, I suppose in due time these two amiable individuals will be united, for he admires her extremely. As

we were returning, my guardian thought proper to read me a lecture on propriety of conduct; I must acknowledge, I think Lady Newrystown deserved it most.

"Good night, my own dear Caroline—offer my very friendly regards to Mr. Hartfield, and let me hear from you soon; but don't scold me too much, for in truth, notwithstanding all the foolish nonsense I have been writing, I am far, very far, from being in good spirits; but, happy or unhappy, still

"Your truly affectionate,

"Frances Cecil Moubray.

"I open my letter to tell you that I have heard of Mrs. Armstrong's arrival in England; she expects to reach Cheltenham in a couple of days; and I am now about to inform Lord St. Maur of my engagement: he seems to entertain a great dislike to watering places, especially Cheltenham; but I think the happiness of getting rid of me for three whole weeks will

more than counterbalance the objection; at any rate, *conte qu'il conte*,—I mean to go."

Cecil's intimation of her intended trip passed without comment; for it happened that no one, with the exception of her guardian, noticed the announcement; and as he made no remark, she flattered herself that, however great his objection to public places, he would not offer any decided opposition to the plan. Great, therefore, was her vexation, when, in consequence of her disregarding a certain "Miss Moubray, Miss Moubray," as she left the breakfast room, she received a summons to Lord St. Maur's private study.

"This is really very tiresome," she said, preparing with much unwillingness to obey the mandate. "I suppose I shall have another lecture on impropriety of conduct; but it matters not; I have made up my mind, and though he talk till doomsday I will not disappoint my dear Mrs. Armstrong. But perhaps the best way of

shortening the business will be to shew by my manner that I am resolved not to give up my intention."

And in accordance with this doughty resolution, Cecil presented herself in her guardian's study, looking as determined and provoking as possible; while he, shrinking in reality from the ungracious part he was about to act, and hoping, by the appearance of great decision, to shorten the discussion, stated his objection to her leaving Selwood in strong terms; but observing no token of submission, the journey was at length positively forbidden. Cecil's astonishment at this, in her eyes, unwarrantable exercise of authority, was only equalled by her indignation; and when, on her refusing to acquiesce in this determination, she was informed that Lord St. Maur's consent was withheld in accordance with General Moubray's wishes, she unhesitatingly avowed her disbelief.

"Do you mean, then, to doubt the truth of my assertion?" he angrily demanded.

"There must be some mistake," replied Miss Moubray; "for I am confident that, were my uncle in England, so far from making any difficulty as to my joining Mrs. Armstrong, he would himself escort me to Cheltenham."

"Then I suppose I may conclude, that in spite of my very decided objection,—nay more, of my prohibition,—it is your intention to leave home?"

A reply in the affirmative.

"In that case, Miss Moubray, you must hold yourself prepared to take the consequences of your obduracy; and allow me to inform you they may be very serious."

"I can apprehend no evil consequences from acting in accordance with what appears to me a duty."

"A duty!" replied the Earl, sarcastically; when you talk of duty it might be as well, perhaps, if you remembered what is due to the memory of your father."

"I cannot see," replied Cecil, "that in pay-

ing a proper attention to my mother's friend, I am in any manner violating the respect due to my father's memory."

"And has the person to whom your father delegated his authority no claim to deference from you?"

"Undoubtedly, a very great one, if that authority had been rightly exercised." Cecil paused, and the Earl angrily rejoined—

"Or rather, not exercised at all."

"No," she replied; "but there is a considerable difference between judicious control and cowardly oppression."

"Cowardly oppression, Miss Moubray? Those are very strong terms. But perhaps you do not understand their full import."

"Not stronger than the occasion warrants. Is it not cowardice when the strong oppress the weak? And does not power when exercised with unnecessary harshness become oppression?"

"Once more, then," said the Earl (who felt

he was getting the worst of the argument), "I ask you, if it is your intention to persevere in opposing my wishes?"

"Unquestionably it is my purpose to fulfil my promise."

"Then now listen to me. I will not recur to the want of deference you have always evinced towards me; because, however trying to my feelings, so long as the evil rested there, it was comparatively of little moment. But your behaviour on the present occasion will, I regret to say, render necessary aline of proceeding, which, however well deserved, I cannot adopt without pain. It has more than once been a question with me, how far I have been justified in admitting into my family a person whose conduct has been characterized by such duplicity, and so utterly unworthy her station in society; nay, hear me out, for the time is come when you and I *must* understand each other. I have, I repeat, more than once doubted the propriety of giving such a companion to my daughter and

nieces; and now, I feel it a duty to Mary, as well as to her cousins, to inform you, that if you do persevere in leaving Selwood, it will be utterly impossible for me to receive you again as an inmate of my house; and further, that, as I neither can nor will hold myself responsible for the conduct of one who seems to glory in opposing my wishes and disregarding my advice, henceforward, all intercourse between us must cease."

"My Lord," replied Cecil, proudly, "I have been guilty of no duplicity; nor have I in any measure deserved the charge you have so wantonly brought against me. The cruel accusation is false—utterly false; it is one you would not have ventured to make, but for the unhappy circumstances in which I am placed, by the absence of my nearest male relative and natural protector. As for your threat, believe me, did I still hesitate, it would have given me a powerful, most powerful, inducement to persist in my intention." Cecil's spirit was fairly roused, and

as, with flashing eyes, crimson cheeks and forehead, and lips quivering with emotion, she left the room without waiting for a reply, she certainly did look very like Lady Selwood.

Scarcely, however, had she reached her room (the usual resort of angry ladies), than she became aware of the impropriety of which she had been guilty. It was her duty, she felt, to obey her guardian, be his conduct what it might; accordingly, a letter was written to Mrs. Armstrong, and a postcript added to Caroline's epistle, informing both these ladies of her vexatious disappointment.

CHAPTER XIII.

Lord St. Maur, meanwhile, was thoroughly uncomfortable; he rode a little, read a little, wrote a little, walked a good deal; and after cutting his finger in attempting to mend a pen, brought himself into the drawing-room, when, having closed the door with some degree of violence, he snatched up a book and flung himself into a chair.

The room thus unceremoniously entered did not present an unattractive scene; first, there was Lady Emily, who being condemned to silence by a *real* headache, the consequence of

her unlucky scheme, looked absolutely interesting. Then Miss Warham, in a graceful, though rather affected attitude, was copying music. And on an ottoman close to an open window (for the day was sultry, notwithstanding the season) sat Cecil; at her feet Lord St Maur's pet spaniel, who, being completely black, had received from his daughter the appropriate name of Daisy; and beside her, Mary, holding a basket of common garden flowers, some of which Miss Moubray was slowly entwining into a chaplet. Nothing could be more perfect than the contrast; Mary, all life and animation—for childish happiness is never quiescent—sometimes sitting, sometimes standing; now patting Daisy, now hugging Cecil, "her dear, kind Cecil, who had laid aside a pretty book to play with her;"—while our heroine, no longer labouring under her excited, angry feelings, was now so languid and exhausted, that even her trifling occupation appeared a toil; and when at times she paused, and, throwing back her glossy ringlets, courted

the balmy zephyrs to her burning brow, she was so pale, so motionless, you might have deemed you gazed on a fair statue rather than on a thing of life.

But all Lady Emily's elegance, Louisa's grace, Cecil's exceeding loveliness, and even Mary's delight, were lost upon Lord St. Maur, who was, in fact, infinitely too much out of sorts to admire any one. Indeed, I question whether Miss Moubray's beauty did not serve to increase, rather than mitigate, her guardian's irritation An ugly, uninteresting person, he might have regarded with feelings of indifference; but it really was very provoking to be thus continually at variance with so captivating a creature.

Lord St. Maur was angry with everything and everybody; with General Moubray, who had placed him in his present onerous position; with Cecil, for her obstinacy; with Mary, for her violent attachment to her offending cousin; and in no slight degree with himself, for his inconsiderate menace, which, if acted upon, would

either entail on him the ridicule of being unable to cope with a mere girl, or the odium of having, by an act of unnecessary harshness, driven her from his house; while the only alternative—that of retracting his threat, was exceedingly unpalatable to such a disposition as his. "I wish Warham were here," thought he, "he might be able to do something with her; as for any further attempt from me, it is clear it will only make the matter worse. What a spirit she has; it beats Lady Selwood's out and out; I wonder when she means to go?"

At this juncture the Earl's soliloquy was interrupted by a shout of delight from Lady Mary. Daisy (for whom the flowery wreath was destined) was a very clever little dog, for he could fetch and carry, ring the bell, beg, and latterly, under Cecil's tuition, he had learnt to walk on his hind legs, or, as Mary termed it, to dance; and now, being duly attired in his new finery, and the usual signal given, this accomplished animal performed his part with so

much ability, that Mary, in a perfect ecstasy of joy, screamed out, "Oh, Papa, look, look at Daisy, see how well he dances; Cecil has taught him. Papa, papa, do look."

"My dear Mary," drawled Lady Emily, "pray don't make such a noise; you forget how unwell I am; my poor head is absolutely splitting."

"Yes," said the Earl, impatiently, "the noise *is* intolerable; be quiet, Mary, and leave the dog alone."

Cecil took up the book which lay beside her on the ottoman; and Mary was silent for about two minutes, and then, weary of the restraint, repeated the signal, which Daisy, as full of fun as his young mistress, obeyed with great alacrity. Mary's enchantment on this occasion was even greater than before; for now it was not Cecil, but she, who had caused the display of canine grace, and her exclamations of delight were proportionably loud.

"Mary," said her father, sternly, "did you

hear me desire you to be quiet. If you can't conduct yourself like a lady, you must go out of the room. Come here this moment: I will *not* have you ruined in this manner."

The crest-fallen Mary obeyed; and, approaching her father, she placed her head upon his shoulder, and looked up in his face so winningly, that the Earl, half ashamed of the violence with which he had checked her innocent gaiety, passed his arm round the waist of the gentle child, and pressed her affectionately to his bosom; while Cecil, feeling herself the real object of his displeasure, rose, and passing through the open window, walked hastily along the terrace until she reached a bench, which, placed near an angle of the stone balustrade, commanded one of the most extensive and beautiful prospects it is possible to imagine.

For a few moments her attention was attracted by the surpassing loveliness of the surrounding scenery; and then her mind wandered to other lands. She thought of the fair south

of France; of Italy, romantic Italy, whose very air breathes poetry and song; of Germany, with all its feudal ruins and simple peasantry; of Paris, gay, life-bestirring Paris: but while her imagination conjured up each sad remembrance of her past existence, it was her mother's image hallowed every scene, her mother's memory every recollection. And then the contrast between her former and her present life—once, so beloved, so tenderly entreated; no wish ungratified, no hope betrayed; — now, the unwelcome inmate of a stranger home, and ever subject to the iron rule of one who hated, almost had insulted her, one who saw crime even in Mary's childish love.

Cecil's mournful reverie was interrupted by the approach of her little cousin. "Oh Cecil, I am so glad I have found you; see, I've brought Daisy; now let us play again; we may make as much noise as we please here, papa will never hear us. Cecil, how very cross he is to-day."

"Mary, you must not speak in that manner."

"Well, I wont; but let us play."

"No, dearest Mary, I cannot; I am tired, and my head aches. I cannot even talk; go in, my love, you know you ought not to be out without your bonnet."

"Oh, I sha'n't catch cold, I'm sure. Don't send me away, Cecil; pray don't; you know I have hardly seen you all the morning, and I do love you so. Let me stay; I wont speak a word." And Mary seated herself on the bench by Cecil's side, and Cecil could no longer bid her go.

"Cecil," said the volatile child, after keeping silence for about five minutes, "do you know why I love you so much? It's because you are exactly like my mamma."

"Like your mamma, Mary? Oh no, I am not, indeed; she was, you know, extremely beautiful."

"And so are you, and very like her too; you are, you are indeed, Cecil; aunt Emily doesn't think so, but papa does."

"Does he?" inquired Miss Moubray, with some degree of interest.

"Yes, yes," (exclaimed Mary, triumphantly, for in her estimation a resemblance to her mother was the very acme of perfection,) "he said so this very morning, when I told him that your name was Frances, like my mamma; he said you were like her in more ways than one. He did, indeed, Cecil."

"This, then," thought Cecil, "is the origin of his hatred to me; but," she added, shuddering, "what a heart must that be which can carry resentment even beyond the tomb."

"Cecil," continued her talkative little companion "I do *so* wish you were my mamma."

"That is a very foolish wish, my dear Mary."

"Why is it foolish?"

"Because it is impossible; I am not old enough; besides, your mother is dead, you know."

"Yes; but you might for all that; you might, indeed; and I will tell you how. If you were to

marry my papa, you would be my mamma. Oh, Cecil, wouldn't you like to marry my papa?"

"Marry Lord St. Maur! No, no," emphatically exclaimed Miss Moubray, "I would rather die!"

The air of mortification which immediately overspread Lady Mary's countenance, reminded Cecil of the impropriety of her reply; and vexed at having so incautiously pained the affectionate child, she was about to soften her ill-advised expression, when the sound of approaching footsteps attracting her attention, she turned, and beheld her guardian close behind her.

Reader, let me advise you when in the open air never to speak upon any but the most trivial matters; for, to say nothing of wilful eavesdropping, on a still day the human voice is heard at an almost incredible distance; and, as in the present instance, your conversation may reach the ears of the very last person you would wish thus to enlighten. Quite unintentionally,

Lord St. Maur had heard Mary's foolish question, and Cecil's inconsiderate reply; and, as may be supposed, this fresh exhibition of her bitterness towards him did not serve to mollify his angry feelings; and—"I suppose Mary will be taught to hate me next," was the impression produced on his highly-irritated mind by the unfortunate asseveration.

"Mary, why are you here without your bonnet? You will catch cold; go in, dear."

"Oh, papa, why should I catch cold more than Cecil? She hasn't got on hers," urged Mary, without making the slightest attempt to move.

"Mary," said the Earl, jerking her off the seat, "I told you to go in, and you will be so good as to obey me; you are getting very troublesome, and must be sent to school unless you alter very much indeed."

"Oh, papa, don't send me to school," said Mary, looking lachrymose, "pray don't."

"Well," replied her father, in a more gentle tone, "go in, then, at once, and let me see no more of this wilfulness."

"Come, Cecil," said the little girl, taking her cousin's hand. Gladly would Cecil have assented, but Lord St. Maur had taken possession of the seat from which he had so unceremoniously displaced his daughter, and she felt that in common courtesy she must remain.

"Go, Mary," said she; "run, run; see who will get first, you or Daisy; not you, I am sure; you laugh too much."

Off went Mary without any further difficulty. But Cecil's interference was unfortunate, for it increased Lord St. Maur's jealousy of her influence over his little girl. A word from Miss Moubray, it seemed, was sufficient, while his wishes, or even threats, were scarcely regarded.

"I am sorry, Miss Moubray," he began, after rather an awkward silence,—"I am sorry that I am again obliged to recur to what is (to *me*, at

least,) a very painful subject; but as you expressed so unequivocally your determination of leaving my house, may I ask when and how you mean to travel?"

"My Lord," replied Cecil, speaking with some difficulty, "I have no such intention. I have relinquished my journey."

"Indeed!" replied the Earl, who thought the conversion much too sudden to be sincere. "May I, then, inquire the motive of so unexpected a change?"

"There can be but one; you have forbidden my going; and, as you this morning reminded me, it is my duty to submit to your decision, however harsh and extraordinary it may appear to me."

"Allow me to remind you, that in thus withholding my consent I have only acted in accordance with General Moubray's directions."

"It may be so; but I find it very difficult to reconcile anything so arbitrary with my uncle's usual indulgence; especially as, to say nothing

of my debt of gratitude to Mrs. Armstrong, and the respect due to my mother's friend, at his own desire I spent three months with the same person whom I am now forbidden to see even for as many weeks."

"And has nothing," said the Earl, suddenly placing himself in front of Cecil, and fixing his penetrating eyes upon her until she coloured with resentment;—"has nothing since occurred which might induce General Moubray to wish to check an intercourse he once considered unobjectionable? Circumstances, you must be aware, sometimes arise, which demand an entire change in our conduct."

"In the present instance I know of none."

"But did not General Moubray think he had reason to complain of Mr. Armstrong; I mean, the individual who was here not very long ago?"

"Yes," replied Cecil, a faint glimmering of light breaking into her mind; "my uncle was very much displeased with him; but as Mrs. Armstrong was, I believe, in no way privy to

her son's conduct, I cannot think his displeasure would extend to her."

"That gentleman is, I suppose, with Mrs. Armstrong, at Cheltenham?"

"If he were, there would be no occasion for my going. But, unhappily, Mrs. Armstrong, relying on my promise, would not suffer either her husband or son to accompany her to England; and as she is in delicate health, I must confess it costs me a great deal to break my word."

"And believe me, I have found the task imposed upon me equally painful."

Cecil's only answer was an incredulous smile, which is (by the way) one of the most irritating things imaginable.

"I suppose," rejoined the Earl, after a moment's silence, "that in acting as he did with regard to General Moubray, Captain Armstrong was not influenced by mere caprice? Doubtless he had good reasons for throwing up his appointment, and remaining in England?"

"Yes," replied Cecil, "I conclude he had."

"And his expectations have been realized?"

"He hopes they will be, at any rate."

"Can you, then, imagine," said Lord St. Maur, quickly, "that, if he has succeeded in gaining the affections of the young lady, her friends will ever sanction the engagement?"

"Do *you* know anything about it?" asked Cecil, with an air of surprise.

"I have heard the subject spoken of by one whose opinion deserves some weight."

"And he thinks Mr. Wilmot will not consent? I own, I am not surprised."

"Wilmot!" repeated the Earl, "What has Mr. Wilmot to do with Captain Armstrong's marriage?"

"A great deal, I should imagine, as his daughter is the person principally concerned. But I thought you were aware of the whole business?"

"I have heard it mentioned; but I did not know Miss Wilmot was the lady in question."

"Then I have betrayed the confidence reposed in me; but, at any rate, as it has been purely accidental, you will not, of course, repeat what I have so inadvertently mentioned."

Lord St. Maur slightly bowed. "Is secrecy, then, of great importance?"

"Yes," replied Cecil, "Miss Wilmot considers it indispensable; so much so, indeed, that although I have urged Captain Armstrong to make that explanation which I consider due to my uncle, he fears she will not consent to it."

"If that be your opinion, why did you not yourself explain the matter before General Moubray left England?"

"Because I had not the slightest clue to Captain Armstrong's conduct until very lately." And Cecil, feeling concealment no longer possible, and that, somehow or other, she was suspected of connivance, gave a slight sketch of the affair.

"Miss Wilmot," said Lord St. Maur, when she had concluded; "is she related to Mr. Wilmot, of Oakhill?"

"His daughter; his only child. Are you acquainted with the family?"

"I cannot say we are acquainted; for in consequence of a quarrel between my father and Mr. Wilmot, no intercourse has been kept up for some years. But we are connected, or rather related, through the late Mrs. Wilmot."

Cecil thought of the bankrupt cotton-spinner, and in spite of all her indignation, and all her chagrin, could not forbear a smile, as she replied, "I am afraid the alliance will not be very desirable in your estimation."

"I do not, certainly, covet the connexion. And you have really given up the idea of joining your friend?" asked Lord St. Maur, who, notwithstanding the relief his mind had received from Cecil's disclosure, could hardly yet credit so sudden and so desirable a change.

"I have, indeed," she replied, "and I regret that I did not immediately desist. I feel I was to blame that I did not sooner yield; but it is the last time I will give you cause for complaint

in that respect; at least, I will *endeavour* to avoid your displeasure during the remainder of my stay at Selwood, which I trust will be very brief, since it is my intention to write without delay to my uncle; and he will, I am convinced, release you from a charge you have found so obnoxious."

"Miss Moubray, you mistake——"

"Lord St. Maur, I am not mistaken; on the contrary, I *understand*, or rather, I should say, I *know*, the motives which have prompted you; for, in truth, I cannot comprehend, nor even could I have imagined, the existence of so vindictive a feeling towards a being who, however formerly to blame, can now offend no more. There is yet another point upon which I have given umbrage; I allude to the mutual affection between Lady Mary and myself. I know that, in strict compliance with your wishes, I should have checked the intimacy; but, circumstanced as I have been, unloved, uncared for, I found it hard to repel the only creature who——" Cecil's voice faltered,

and, in spite of all her efforts, tears started from beneath her snowy eyelids; but brushing them hastily away, she continued, in a firmer tone—"Still it shall be done; and perhaps you will yourself speak to Mary, and explain your wishes, for she will hardly credit my assertions." As she concluded these words, Cecil rose, and bowing haughtily, returned towards the Castle; while Lord St. Maur, after making a vain effort to detain her, remained leaning against the stone balustrade, his arms folded, his brows knit, and his whole countenance betraying the perturbed workings of his mind.

Here he was again joined by the persevering Mary, now duly bonnetted and shawled. "Papa," said she, after watching him for a minute or two, "is it true that I am not to go any more into Cecil's room? She says you don't like it. Papa, speak to me."

"What do you do in Cecil's room, Mary?"

"Oh, I say my lessons, and read, and work; and Cecil tells me pretty stories."

"But cannot all that be done in one of the sitting-rooms?"

"Ah, but you'd come in."

"And supposing I did?"

"Then you would know all about it."

"About what?"

"Oh, it's a secret; I must not tell. But," continued Mary, with all that discretion for which her sex is famed, "I will tell *you*, if you will promise not to tell anybody else."

"Well, Mary, what *is* this mighty mystery?" said he, in rather an absent tone.

"Why, papa, Cecil is teaching me to make a purse—a purse for you; you can't think how beautiful it is! Blue and gold; I wanted it to be red, but she said you liked blue better; and I have done it all myself; I have, indeed, even the H;—that was very hard. Cecil said you would not like to have any of her work; and so, though she unpicked it ever so often, she made me do every stitch. And now it is done, all excepting the clasp; but she couldn't shew

me how to put that on this morning; her hand shook too much."

Lord St. Maur made no comment on his daughter's disclosure; for, to say the truth, he would rather not have heard anything of the kind just then. But children seldom require an answer, and Mary, being in a confidential mood, resumed,—"Do you know, papa, I think poor Cecil is very unhappy; yes, I am sure of it; she cries very often indeed."

"Mary," said her father, querulously, "are you sure that temper has not something to do with Miss Moubray's tears? I know somebody who cries sometimes, not because she is unhappy, but because she is naughty."

"Cecil naughty! Oh, papa, Cecil is never naughty; she is good, always good; everybody says so; and so kind to me. No, no, she is not naughty. But," continued the child, in a mysterious tone of voice, "I know why she cries; it is because you don't love her. Papa, why don't you love Cecil? I do."

"So it appears," he answered, drily.

"Yes, I love her better than anybody."

"Better than me, Mary?"

"No, no,—not better than you; I love you best of all; Cecil says I ought, and so I do. But, papa, don't you like me to love Cecil?"

"Mary, I have often told you that I do not wish you to form any friendships out of your own family. You have plenty of relations; can't you attach yourself to them? Your cousin Anna, or Lady Newrystown, who takes so much notice of you?"

"Aye, but I love Cecil a great deal better than Lady Newrystown, or aunt Emily, or Anna; besides, she *is* my relation, my mamma's relation, and that's one reason why I love her so much."

"Mary," inquired the Earl, quickly, still anxious to find in Miss Moubray's conduct something to justify his own intemperance,—"tell me, does Cecil often speak to you of your mamma?"

"No," replied the child, mournfully; "I sometimes ask her, but she always says she does not recollect her: nobody does. Papa, how odd it is that no one can remember my mamma."

At this moment, the first dinner bell attracting Lady Mary's attention, she exclaimed, "Let us go into the orangery, papa, and pick some flowers for Cecil to wear at dinner; she likes nothing so much as orange flowers."

The Earl complied; and in a few minutes an exquisitely-arranged nosegay was presented to Miss Moubray, but her swollen eyes and aching temples forbad her re-appearance that evening; and when she heard whose hand had plucked the fragrant blossoms, nothing but the fear of again distressing Mary withheld her from throwing them disdainfully away.

END OF VOL. I.

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